

SISTERS UNDER THE SARI



Under the Sari



RUTH GALLUP ARMSTRONG

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

RUTH GALLUP ARMSTRONG's fascination with India and the Far East extends over many years, beginning at the age of twelve with her purchase of an Oriental vase as a souvenir of a family trip. Later she began a collection of eighteenth-century Kashmir shawls—which led her into an intensive study of Indian textiles, art, and life. She has discussed them with specialists at Iowa State University, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and Indian students. Her dream of learning firsthand more about the mysteries of the East was realized recently when she lived with Hindu families in India, as she relates in this book.

Mrs. Armstrong, born in Jefferson, Iowa, has lived most of her life in academic surroundings. Her interest in writing began during her undergraduate days at Cornell College and her graduate days at the State University of Iowa—an interest revived after her trip to India and brought to the public eye by the appearance of this book.

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To

MY DEAR INDIAN SISTER TAI AND TO
MY VALUED FRIENDS LILIAN AND LEONARD FEINBERG

I thought that my voyage had come
to its end at the last limit of my power,
—that the path before me was closed,
that provisions were exhausted and the
time came to take shelter in a silent
obscurity.

But I find that thy will knows no
end in me. And when old words die
out on the tongue, new melodies break
forth from the heart; and where the
old tracks are lost, new country is
revealed with its wonders.

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SISTERS UNDER THE SARI

new melodies break forth

THE SNOW FELL QUIETLY, each flake a perfect crystal, making a soft white cover over the dark frozen earth. Every tree, every bush was abloom with snow. Cluster upon cluster, of snowballs formed on the large branches, smaller snow flowers caught on the fine branches, and the slender bridal wreath drooped low, white with snow florets. I stood at the far window of the living room looking out at the snow beauty. What could ever bring beauty and comfort to my heart, frozen with my beloved husband's death, as this gentle white snow had brought it to the frozen earth?

I was waiting for my son to bring a woman to meet me, an East Indian. She was to be my companion these first hard months. When Bruce and his wife had protested that I could not stay alone and I too did not want the dark hours to be solitary, friends said that a Mrs. Kalpana Sathie had just come to the University. She was Indian, a graduate student, charming—about fifty years old. I had had an interest in India for many years, so Bruce was bringing her to me.

I heard their voices in the hall. I turned from the cold white beauty of the outdoors and walked the long length of the room, looking at this slight dark woman, her thin sari the color of forget-me-nots, her face with its fine sensitive lines, beautiful. She stood waiting; I put out my hands, she put out hers; I took her warm small hands in my pale cold ones. I looked deep in her eyes, down into her heart. She looked into my eyes and down into my heart. "Will you come to me?" I said. She answered, "Yes."

So the days and months began to go by, endless days alone while Kalpana was at the University, but in the evening Kalpana would come home and we would eat our dinner and talk about India and then she would say, "At nine, my lessons done, I will say my prayers and come to you."

All evening I would lie in my bed and read, a rest less turning of pages, my mind lost in my grief, but waiting for the fragrance of incense. I knew that Kalpana was down the hall, sitting in her room by the table on the little cane seated chair, her legs crossed under her, studying. Once it was nine o'clock she would light the long stick of incense in its small silver holder, fold her hands in front of her face and go into contemplation of gods—abstract and universal. At this moment she would not think of Krishna who was to her as Jesus is to me, but just of God, that all pervading power of all people. The fragrant thick curl of smoke would come down the hall into my room, its sandalwood odor bringing the Orient into my breath, into my mind.

All at once I would be conscious that Kalpana was sitting Indian-wise on my bed—a tiny figure like a Buddha, growing smaller and browner as she sat there. She would tell me of her childhood, her schooling, her husband, her sons and her widowhood and then she would bring me sharply back to reality saying, "This is your life; you must face it. Do not turn back or look ahead. This is the way it is, live in this moment. I will say to you as my blind brother said to me, 'Pay no attention to the advice of other people. They will never let you ride

the horse nor go before it. They will never let you walk behind or sit upon it.' Remember always that what cannot be cured must be endured." Then in a soft voice she would say, "Now I will give you the massage," and when I protested, knowing that that was not the work for a woman of her caste, she would say, "When there is need, women in my family do this for one another."

Many weeks went by, I calling her "Kalpana," she calling me "you." One night she said, "You must call me Tai, that means younger sister; and I will call you Akka, that means elder sister."

"Tai," I said as I called her "younger sister" for the first time, "how did it happen that you a Hindu came half around the world to me when I needed you so?"

And she replied, "It was destined."

Tai charmed me when she read my palm. She would only do it early Sunday morning and only if the sun was shining brightly, an auspicious hour and day.

"Akka," she said, "good fortune flows in your hand. You have a sister line beside your life line; it will be a help to you. And you have the extra line of fate cutting across your hand to join your life line. It is a source of strength to you. The troubles of life are in your hand and the deep sorrow of losing your son in the war and the loss of your husband cut across your life line, but always you have strong support in your life."

She ended the reading speculating on the strong markings on the Mount of the Moon.

"Akka, watch in your life for something connected with the moon or the sea. Fame and money can come to you from the moon and the sea. See the deep lines from the Mount of the Moon flowing into your fate and money lines." I remembered old ladies saying to me when I was a child, "Ruth, you were born under a lucky star."

And then Tai pointed out the long lines of a trip developing on the side of my hand, a trip marked on my hand in the shape of a mango, saying, "It is destined that you go with me to visit India."

The months and days passed rapidly for Tai. She

had class work and studying to do but she found time and took every opportunity to give talks. Service groups asked her; ladies clubs and church groups listened to her and asked so many questions that she was always late home from their meetings. She was very serious about her Indian point of view but I teased her gently, ritually, saying, "I suppose you began 'I am a Hindu.'" Tai would laugh and reply, "Yes, and I also told them about my operation." (Tai had had serious surgery before she came to Ames and it was one of the highest points in her stay in the United States.) "Just think," she would say, "those people in the college in Kansas, knew me only as a student but they took my every care and paid every penny of the expense as if I had been a member of their own family. This willingness to work and give as a community, to help everyone, is the finest thing I have seen in the United States."

During holidays Tai went on the arranged visits for foreign students, one time returning from a farm that raised eggs commercially with the new found skill of making eggs into ornamental boxes, jewel cases covered with junk jewelry, and the two of us spent many happy hours with tinsel and ribbon, glittering paste stones and delicate egg shells, working together to make these fantasies, for friends and to carry back to India for her family.

She set up a friendship with another woman on the campus who wore a sari. Sitra Jayawardena, from Ceylon, lonely away from her husband, child and family, came to us each weekend, making those days ring with her bright merry laughter. Desai, Delip, Chandra, Sing, Devendra and many other Indian graduate students came to seek counsel and friendship. Kamlabai came on a Ford Foundation grant to visit briefly Iowa State University and stayed with us. Mrs. Kamlabai was the Directress (president) of Lady Irwin College in New Delhi, the leading women's school for home economics in India. Tai had been a student and on the staff of the institution and the two women had become close friends. Dr. Ghate stopped for a brief visit. A profes-

sor of Tai's back in India, a Brahmin and a polished and charming gentleman, he had gone on to the staff of the Gaekwar of Baroda and now was teaching in the United States. He came bringing saris for us to carry to women in the household of the Gaekwar, who was now dead. And Tai was engaged in correspondence with an Indian girl, Kumud, in California, making plans to see her as we left from the west coast.

The snows melted as day by day we talked about our trip to India—for by this time I had accepted my destiny and was swept along breathlessly. The words Tai, younger sister, and Akka, elder sister, came to have real meaning for us as we drew closer and closer together.

Sometimes on the long Sundays Tai took my mind away from my sad thoughts with her Indian pictures. Again and again I looked at them and listened to her relate the customs so strange to me.

There were pictures of Tai's two sons, their wives and the eight grandchildren and I learned all about them but I was most fascinated by the picture of the wedding of the Gokhales' elder daughter. Tai called Mr. Gokhale her brother-cousin although he was not a blood relative but one who had come close to her through long friendship. The Gokhales were wealthy and this wedding had been a big event. One of the photographs showed a platform that had been built and on it molded in plaster a representation of the ocean. There were waves with the enormous body of a cobra, a naga, coiled on the surface of the water. Resting on his coils was a silver divan on which sat the bridal pair, crowned in flowers. The bridegroom, with handsome Hindu features, had the remote look of a god; the bride had the passive beauty, the dignity of a goddess. Over their heads was the cobra, spreading his hood to protect them. Over the bridal couple and the snake there was a silken circular canopy. Tai took great delight in describing every detail of this wedding.

Tai was teaching in Amravti when this wedding occurred. Her train was late. She was met by Gokhale's

chauffeur and taken directly to the Gokhale bungalow. Gokhale met her on the porch. He was dressing for the wedding. Tai's eyes would snap when she would recount the scene. She would recall, "Gokhale said, 'Tai, I put the arrangements in your hands. Much needs correcting. I leave it to you.'" I could see Tai in her blue sari with a heavy golden border, with the plum colored shawl, solid with golden brocade, over her shoulders, its ends draped gracefully over her arms. Tai was slight and of only average height but she moved with regal grace.

"Akka," she would continue, her voice brightening, excited, "I went [what a poor word for the majesty with which she walked] to the Shamiana. I clapped my hands once, just once, but sharply." (I do not think that Tai removed her brocade shawl or disturbed its gracious folds to clap her hands.) "The servants at once stopped and raised their heads. 'I must speak to the head caterer.' He came running and stood before me. Gokhale had hired extra service, caterers and a large staff to handle these special arrangements. 'Gokhale has put me in charge. The seating must be changed.'"

I could see the slight uplift of Tai's head and the glint in her eyes.

"Oh, Akka, you should have seen the consternation. I demanded that the divans [there were dozens of them], chairs and all the rugs be moved. The ground was covered with oriental rugs. I told him that the divans must face the throne on which the bridal pair were to sit. The rugs must go under the divans. The man looked as if he would fall at my feet."

"Madam, impossible, the guests will begin to arrive in an hour."

"Nothing is impossible! Order your men to work." (I could hear Tai's voice sharp like electricity with authority.) "You should have seen them, Akka. Men appeared from everywhere, such a scurrying."

Tai in some incarnation must have lived in the Western world for she not only had the capacity but she did push like a Westerner. She was certain that I had been an Indian in a former incarnation and I did

feel as if I had been in India before for so many things that should have been strange to me were familiar. But I never dared tell Tai that I thought some time in the centuries she had been Western.

"I knew by that bungle in seating that, expensive as he was, this caterer was not to be trusted. I directed and checked the serving. I took no chance with them. I saw to it that the governor was served first. And I saw that the best of the food was served to the 'personalities' then to the other guests. The servants were grumbling because they didn't have the chance to snatch for themselves.

"Then I made an innovation. Mrs. Gokhale was sitting with the women guests. You know, Akka, that while an Indian wife has an honorable position in the family life, her duty is to serve her husband; she never takes a prominent place. Only men sat on the divans; the women sat in modest groups in the back rows, most of them with their palus (end of the sari) or their shawls over their heads. I called Mrs. Gokhale to me. I told her, 'Gokhale has taken his place at the front of the house to bid the guests goodby. I want you to come and stand beside him, bid each guest goodby and say some little thing to each guest, men as well as women.' You see, Akka, Gokhale had circulated among the men, but Mrs. Gokhale had sat with the women. She is accustomed to seek my advice and do as I bid her so she came with me. I explained the plan to Gokhale; at once the guests began to come. There was great surprise at seeing her there. It was the talk of Nagpur. It had never been done before. But Gokhale and Mrs. Gokhale received acclaim. Mrs. Gokhale was raised to a high place, and she still has praise and prestige from this. She has never forgotten that I helped her take that place. We have always had the best of relations but she does me special honor because of my help."

Other pictures of the Gokhale family caught my fancy. One of them was a screen of flowers, arching up into a bower. Before it, sitting cross-legged on a low, round silver stool ("Yes, Akka, that stool is solid silver. The Gokhales have several of them for occasions.") was

a young Indian girl with smooth black hair topped by a pointed crown of flowers, oval face, dark eyes, round red dot of the Hindu on her forehead. She was not a beauty, but with the lovely, pliant gentle look of the protected Indian girl. Garlands of flowers hung heavy about her neck.

Tai would begin, "This is the elder daughter of the Gokbales. She is in her first pregnancy and is being honored at a party of her mother's friends. Indian girls at the seventh month of their first pregnancy are brought to their parents' home to stay until after their delivery. It is felt that this first time when a girl is emotional and afraid, that her mother will know best how to comfort and care for her. Once she is home, she is petted by everyone, she is given special foods to nourish her child and ease her delivery, she is given massage and and she is entertained. And at a special party her mother gives for her she is honored, garlanded and crowned with flowers. Each day there are distractions: she is taken for rides, she is taken boating on the lake, the mother's friends and the mother have many parties for her. We feel that the first pregnancy is an important adjustment in the life of a young married woman. And we feel too that it is important for the coming child to develop and arrive in ease and in felicitous surroundings."

Then I would look at the companion pictures—a double row of Indian women sitting cross-legged facing one another on a tile floor. At the far end, there was the bower with the daughter, crowned and garlanded, squatting on the silver stool. The room was high and wide. Before each woman was a silver plate, large enough to be a tray. "That is a *thal*," Tai would say, "beside it a silver jug (a *lota*) and a silver goblet. See, the pattern of the tile makes a design around each plate." These older women were in dark saris, rich with gold and brocade, Tai would tell me, but the sari folds concealed the women. Their faces were not turned toward the camera, nor toward the girl. Their backs and their heads curved a little down. Their faces were as concealed as their bodies. Only the girl, this young

pregnant woman, her body, too, hidden by her sari, looked with soft direct gaze into your eyes from the picture.

The next picture Tai explained was the first feeding of the first child. "It is a ceremony when the first solid food is given to the first born. It occurs when the child is about a year old. Of course the child has had rice, gruel, and soft foods, but this ceremony is symbolic of a period of development in the child's life. This honor belongs to the oldest brother of the child's mother. You know, Akka, an Indian girl goes to her husband's family. She lives in his family home under the direction of her mother-in-law. But at certain times she comes back to her own home. The first feeding of the child is one of these times. There is reason in the girl's brother being given the honor. It brings him into a certain close relationship with this child. It is his duty to give a silver thal to the child at this ceremony. That thal is used to serve the rice to the child. The rice is symbolic, to us it is our staff of life. With this gift of silver and the gift of food, putting the rice in the child's mouth, the uncle assumes a responsibility for this child. If need arises, he is the one to protect the child."

I, accustomed to American babies, said, "Tai, our babies spit out their first solid food. What would that do to the symbolism?"

Tai laughed at me with that quick little snap of her eyes, and movement of her head. "Oh, Akka, you know we are practical too. They always sweeten up that bit of rice. The babies don't spit it out; almost always they reach out their hand for more."

Eighteen months passed; it was time to get my passport. My friends Jane and Marnion came in Marnion's car to take me to apply at the Federal Building for the passport. The pretty young matrons chatted as we drove along. I far away from them thinking of twenty years before when I had started collecting Kashmir shawls, my fancies caught in the varied colors of their fine woven web, thinking of my far away dream of India and that now for the first time in my life I had bought a ticket, and it was a ticket to India.

Bombay

JAPAN, HONGKONG, BANGKOK were behind us and now we were leaving Ceylon. We strapped our seat belts and looked from the air down at its jewel colors. The sea and sky were sapphires, the sun was a ruby, its rays made diamonds glint everywhere. The pale shadows were moonstones. Now we were higher and Ceylon, the Island of Ceylon, was an emerald, a beautiful gem. Tai looked at me and smiled. Her face was so lovely, the eternal youth of her, young love that lost its physical shape with her husband's death was always a lighted flame in her heart. Its warmth gave a soft glow to her countenance. "This is Thursday, my day, Akka." I took her hand. She held tightly to me. She was trembling. She had had her fears with her operation that she might not live to see her sons and their families again. Now Tai, predestined as she believed her life, fearless as she was, prayed that no accident would befall her in these last hours of her long journey, and I prayed with her.

Tai looked out the window of the plane. "India!"

she shouted in my ear. "There is the tip of India below us!" She was overjoyed. We couldn't see color but we could distinguish ocean, coast and land. The towns and cities were *irregular dark shadows*. Tai gave me a geography lesson from the air. And in between she talked about her family. They were poor people but proud and educated. India had none of the conveniences of the United States. How would I get along? The afternoon hours were long. I reassured her again and again that already I knew her children and loved them. I was old fashioned in my ways and not devoted to modern gadgets. She talked again of her blind brother and how hard it would be to take up her life in India without him. It was dusk. The sign lighted: "Fasten seat belts."

Down we came. "Bombay—It is Bombay! Akka, I am home!"

We were gathering up our parcels and bags. Tai could hardly wait now. She ran down the steps from the plane. She was waving and calling to the crowd of people waiting above on the ramp. She ran back to help me down. "I can't see them! Akka, I can't see them! It is so dark!" I straightened my back. I had to gather my strength to walk briskly along. I was worn down with the heat and the long journey. We went through the mechanics of entry without delay. Some Indians had the contents of their bags spread all about; hot arguments were going on. ("Those are Punjabis, always trying to smuggle," Tai said.) The gold chain Tai had bought in Bangkok, hidden in my bag, wasn't discovered. I was so excited I didn't remember to worry about it. We were in closed rooms but all at once we were done, free. Tai rushed ahead, I after her, out into the waiting room. Tai was embracing and kissing her son Mukund. She had her little grandson Anil in her arms. She was squeezing the legs and arms of Pramila, clinging to her father. Her sister Ushe, her husband and their two children were there. I was not left standing alone. Mukund put Pramila down and made a deep namaste to me. Palms together, hands high over his head, swinging low to touch my feet. Smiling as the boy

and girl handed them to him, he ringed my neck with garlands, then Tai's. Garlands heavy with roses and jasmine, garlands pungent with marigolds, long loops that fell below our waists, short loops like necklaces; we were fragrant and heavy with garlands.

Flashlights had been popping among the incoming throng. Now a photographer approached us. Tai and I, flower bedecked, stood in the center, around us Tai's dear ones. She was glowing, triumphant. Her brother-in-law said, "I have made reservations for you at the Taj Mahal Hotel." We were off in taxicabs in a flurry, two cabs, for nine people and our baggage. I soon discovered that this was luxury. Taxicabs, tongas, rickshaws are stuffed to bursting with no complaints. There was traffic of cars and buses, then we were into the city. I was crowded back in the corner of the car; Mukund and the children were with us but I could see tall white buildings with balconies. We had our first glimpse of the Gateway to India on a finger of land, in the bay just outside the hotel. We passed a statue of Victoria and drew up at the grand entrance of the Taj Mahal. Our car door was opened and we were ushered in by an Indian servant in full regalia—tight wound turban, uniform with red belt and epaulets. Tai had teased me that in India I would be a "mem sahib," but the servant did not address me. (As a matter of fact, I was not called mem sahib a single time. I think it was because I was with Indians and accepted on a different basis.) The Indian grandly and silently bowed us to the elevator and we were up, still in a tight group with Tai's family, the air (as well as our necks) heavy with the fragrance of flowers.

In the seconds we rode up in the elevator it was my turn to say to myself, "Bombay, India. This is India!" Coming down at an airport is so impersonal. There was the warm welcome of Tai's family, honoring us with garlands, but it could have been any airport and most of the people were in Western clothes; the glimpses from the taxi could have been any English city street. It was when we turned into the drive and rode along the

bay, the Bay of Bombay, that I said "Bombay!" and it was when we slowly passed the Gateway of India as we drew up to the Taj Mahal Hotel that I said "India. This is India!" The waters of the bay were dark, ships faintly lighted, the causeway out to the portal shadowed, but the gateway stood high, imposing, clear to view, its Indian architecture pure against the sky. In that instant of high emotion my mind marshaled events with lightning speed. I saw King George V and Queen Mary make their landing and come solemnly through the high portal for their Durbar; crowning them Emperor and Empress of India, the same King George who on this visit presented Tai's father with a golden sword; and I saw the last of the British troops leave through its portals. Tai had talked steadily with Mukund. But the Bay of Bombay and the Gateway of India needed no pointing out to me. I knew them. And now going up in the elevator I said to myself, "I am in India, Tai's India."

Down high, wide corridors; I was relieved to be in our room. I was weary from the long journey, Japan, Bangkok, Thailand, Ceylon. The last hours in the air had been a strain. Tai for some reason had been afraid. There had been omens that she might not return home. But now we were safely here. I gave myself up to being hot and tired.

There were two beds and two ceiling fans. There was a large screen placed to shield the view of the beds. The rest of the room, a large space, was a comfortable sitting room. I was too hot and too worn to be aware of the implication of the sitting room with its two small sofas, two armchairs, and in the big bay window, four straight chairs around a tea table. My first lesson in Indian life was before me. Back of me Ushe sat down sedately; the brother-in-law sprawled on a sofa. Tai was here and there in the room, supervising the storing of our luggage in the wardrobe, ordering tea, putting our flowers in water. Mukund was following her, visiting. The children were everywhere, especially the bath-room, flushing the stool, running the taps full force.

Tai said briskly (I was hers now to command), "Akka, go in the bathroom and freshen up." While I held the cool wet cloth to my face, I heard people coming and I heard the phone ringing. I wondered with vague alarm what was going on.

The end of the room with the sofas and chairs seemed full of people. There were Mukund, Tai's son, and his two children, already familiar; and Tai's sister, Ushe, her husband, and their son and daughter. But there was a strange Indian man sitting alone on a couch; and looking as if they had just come in the door, there was a group of three Indians, an older man and two girls.

Tai led me at once to the tall, dark Indian man sitting on the couch. He rose. "Mrs. Armstrong, this is Dr. Joshi." His return greeting was formal, in a British voice. I put out my hand. Gravely he shook it. I couldn't remember how this man was part of Tai's life. She led me on to the group standing close together, a tall Indian man, two slender girls in pale saris. "This is Mr. Pardhi, Kale's father-in-law; and this is Shiela, Mr. Kale's wife, and her younger sister." I knew from the name Kale who they were. Mr. Kale had called often at my home in Ames, coming with his friend Mr. Yogi late Sunday afternoons to have tea and to visit with Tai and me. Mr. Kale was competently working for his Ph.D. in Dairy Industry at the university with still a year to go. He was a strong, hearty man, his hair thinning back from his large-featured, dark face. Tai and I would ask for his wife, and many times he would say his wife was in the hospital again. When we mentioned the long separation and that the change to the United States might benefit her, he would shake his head and say, "No, she could never stand the sea voyage; she could never endure the cold of American winter." He had brought saris of nylon for us to carry to his wife and her sister. Tai had queried him a little, saying the material was too thin and pale; Kale had just smiled the slow full smile he had. Now I was meeting Kale's wife, Shiela, her sister, and her father, Mr. Pardhi.

Shiela made a low namaste as did the sister. Her sari was pale, frail material and under it Shiela had no substance. She was like a wraith blown by a breeze. Mr. Pardhi stood back of his daughters, tall and gray-looking rather than brown. He wore a frock coat thin with age, over a long, fine white dhoti, with shiny bronze Moroccan leather shoes. Mr. Pardhi made a solemn namaste, then he said, "Mr. Kale asked us to have your care." Tai said, "Sit here, Akka." (I was too tired to realize that calling me Akka, elder sister, openly put me in an intimate position with her family and friends.) Shiela floated to a couch, the younger sister with her. The sister too was a shadow, a little larger, a little stronger shadow but inseparable from Shiela.

There was a great deal of conversation. Some, as in all groups, talked a great deal, some talked just a little; only Dr. Joshi was silent. Tai's grandchildren played about; Ushe's daughter sat close to her but the boy came over and very politely asked me for American stamps. The elders shoved him away but I promised what I had. A bearer brought a tea tray with the usual plate of English biscuits. Ushe produced from somewhere a tiered brass container, each layer a different delicious delicacy. This was my first experience with this producing by Indian women. Away from home, they would magically bring out as it was needed, food, water, an extra bit of bedding.

At last, Tai's granddaughter Pramila fell asleep in her father's arms. The brother-in-law had teased her, pulling at her silver anklet. Anil, the grandson, was leaning hard on his father's knee. On and on they stayed. Tai was flushed with victory; she had made the venture to a foreign land and returned safe; but I was overcome with fatigue. Finally Ushe, the brother-in-law, Mukund and the children left, Tai following them out into the corridor.

As soon as Tai was back, Mr. Pardhi began to make arrangements for our care. What were our plans? We must first look after our luggage at customs. He would have a car for us at the door of the hotel at nine in the

morning. I looked at his frayed cuffs and knew he had no car of his own; I was dismayed by his offer. He told us he had feared Shiela would not be able to greet us, but fortunately she had returned just yesterday from the hospital and he regretted again that they had not known the hour of our arrival at the airport so that they could meet us there. Tai moved them, still talking about plans, to the door. Shiela was so frail it seemed as if she should be supported as she walked, but there was a vital spark in her.

We returned to Dr. Joshi; he was standing, silent and dark, so correct in his Bond Street clothes but so Indian. Tai pulled a chair close, said, "Dr. Joshi is Dr. Ghate's close friend." She began talking to him in a low, swift voice. Once in a while he would question and say a few words. Their conversation went on and on. I knew now who Dr. Joshi was. Dr. Ghate had told me in his elegant, cool Brahmin way when he had written the names of his friends in my address book. "Dr. A. C. Joshi, Sandhurst Road, Pirbhoy Mansions, Girgon, Bombay." There had been no mention of his family—only that Dr. Joshi was one of the most prominent and eminent surgeons in Bombay. Then Dr. Ghate had linked Dr. Joshi to himself in the story of his life. Dr. Joshi, Dr. Ghate and Sir Pandit as young men had worked under the Gaekwar of Baroda. They had formed the close friendship of Indian men, so close that years spent apart made no difference. The Gaekwar of Baroda, that princely name of the magic past, what golden years they had enjoyed under him. Now the Gaekwar was gone, but Tai and I were carrying gorgeous-colored nylon saris, gifts from Dr. Ghate, to the women of his family who were left. My tired mind ran down the addresses in my book: "Her Highness Maharani Shantha Devi of Baroda, Laxmi Vilas Palace," the Gaekwar's widow; his daughter-in-law (the son was dead); the granddaughter. Dr. Ghate had said, "I will give them intimation of your coming. Tai will know how to address these people for an audience." My mind wandered on. Dr. Ghate said "Tai" but she never used any name

to his face. To me she said "Dr. Ghate." And this friendship between Tai and Dr. Ghate was the link with Dr. Joshi and Sir Pandit, his closest friends. At last Tai rose. Dr. Joshi bid us a formal good-bye and was gone.

Tai was still excited with her return but happy. "Akka, get your clothes off at once. How tired you are, my dear. Already you can see how different are our Indian ways." In a few minutes we were asleep, lulled by the soft whir of the fans moving the warm air around and around.

The next morning we awakened to a buzz of activity. We were to be in Bombay just three days. Later when we made our trip to South India we would visit Bombay again, but now it was all business. We had to go to customs and get my big suitcase, shipped by air freight from Bangkok, and, most of all, Tai's two trunks and two big wooden boxes. We had to buy holdalls and we had social obligations. The phone had been ringing last evening in addition to the distraction of so many guests. The brother of Kumud, Tai's friend in California, was to come about twelve; he was urging, even on the phone, that we go to his mother that afternoon to break the news about Kumud's love affair. The next day, in the afternoon, we were to go to Tai's sister for tea, then on to Sir Pandit's, the other friend of Dr. Ghate. We had had a charming note from Sir Pandit. He was suffering from his heart so asked us to come to him. The third day we were to have lunch with Dr. Joshi at the cricket club. The rest of that day would be open for the "unforeseen." That word I came to know was synonymous with frustration.

We were sitting in our front windows, flung open to the morning air. I was watching two servants, their brown bodies in loin cloths, in the garden below. One of them in dilatory fashion poured water from a big old brass English watering can on red geraniums in the beds. The other servant squatted idly sweeping. He was flicking a bundle of reeds tied in a knot along the path. Outside the wall traffic was beginning in the street: cars, buses, trucks, a few rickshaws but no tongas,

no cows. Tai took time to tell me that most of the cows in Bombay had been moved out to government-owned cowparks, and that it was a beneficent gesture for a wealthy man to donate money for a home for aged cows. Tai was talking too about Mukund, what a devoted son he was to come all the way to Bombay to welcome her home to India. It was an expensive trip even coming third class and staying with Ushè. Dear Mandakini (Mukund's wife) was ill again and Sujata, the baby girl, was just ten months old. Tai was regretting that Mukund could not have stayed and made the trip to Nagpur with us so that we could help with the children. How dear and thoughtful of him to have brought them. Mukund had had to return for he had a pressing law case. It was his usual bad luck, that he had come too early and had had to return before we did.

It was eight and time for breakfast. It was pleasant to walk along the corridor with Tai. "Bombay, India"; I kept repeating the magic words. We took the elevator to the "Morning Room" and were led to a table by the window by the head waiter. A few men were having breakfast in the pleasant, crisp white-tabled room, newspapers propped in front of them. Eyes had followed Tai as we walked across the room, Tai, a woman of fifty in a city full of women clad in saris, Tai in a soft green sari, suitable for the dust and heat of city streets, but with that sari draped with the skill of a Paris original, Tai with a lovely face, well-shaped body; she stood and walked with grace; but it was that gift called charm that drew people to her.

Tai said, "Enjoy your breakfast, Akka. Soon you will be eating Indian food." It was pleasant to sit there; the windows looked out on the red geranium garden; the servants were still watering and sweeping; Tai talked more about Mukund. I had not realized last night in the heat and the confusion, that the brother-in-law and Tai's sister Ushè were taking Mukund and his children straight to the train from the hotel. And I didn't realize even then what it meant for Tai not to see him off. "You were unable to go, Akka; you were

exhausted and I could not leave you alone in the hotel the first night." I agreed it was too bad Mukund had come too early to Bombay by misunderstanding and so had to return early to Nagpur. It was Mukund's usual lack of luck. Tai talked on. "Isn't Mukund a handsome man although he is darker and not so tall as Madhu. He tries so hard to do what is right, but his horoscope is bad; difficulties always come to him."

Tai insisted that she had not taken on American ways but she did slip her watch over on her wrist and keep track of time like an American. It was nearly nine when we drove away from the hotel in the car Mr. Pardhi had sent. It was high and old but its leather cushions gleamed with polish like Mr. Pardhi's shoes. (Mr. Pardhi said that he had part time use of the car from a brother-in-law, but I think this was fiction.) I looked back at the Taj Mahal Hotel. Its stark shape was hung all over with balconies, punctuated with spires, proclaiming its Moslem architecture with arched domes and windows, sparkling white in the sun. I knew this Taj was the India made to please tourists, but I enjoyed it.

2

About us in the street, cars were racing with the dash of all big cities, but hampered here by the fleets of bicycles. All seemed to be pedaling in one direction like waves, all of them by men with black hair, dark skin, white cotton shirts and trousers. Soon we turned into a narrow street, lined with small shops. It was my first Indian bazaar. The driver stopped, opened the car door. We were where luggage was sold in every shop. Tai had been very proud of her heavy leather, hand-stitched suitcases. Now I saw bags of every kind, piles of them, some good, some very poor. Tai asked and at each place they would spread out their holdalls, heavy tan canvas with leather straps. I thought Tai had pre-

learned in minutes that all those big buildings were custom houses. The Indians sat in the buildings; they never repaired, they never cleaned.

At that first moment, Tai and I thought blithely that within an hour we would be out with my suitcase and making arrangements for the transportation of her sea luggage; but the buildings so dark and grimy soon started forebodings. Half aware as I had been the night before, I remembered the brother-in-law had pompously demanded to see Tai's papers for her sea luggage. Tai had given him the custom papers to read but had promptly taken them back and had made no answer to his sour growl that it would take weeks to get her luggage. I too thought it a bit of bad temper that he was not more in charge of our affairs, but when I looked at those forbidding buildings I remembered what he had said.

In the wide paved passageways and open square between the buildings, men were sauntering about. Tai asked directions, and we entered the nearest building, but at the door we were brushed by a girl going out. She was almost a child, a gypsy, with gay billowing full skirts, bodice, black braids and tantalizing beauty. We went into a hallway and Tai started up the steps calling, "Come, Akka, be careful, the steps are uneven." I kept my eyes on the stones, hollowed with years of wear, but as I looked over the handrail, I had a glimpse of people sitting on the floor beside and under the stairs.

Two flights up, down a corridor, the wooden floor boards frayed with age, we went into a large room filled with desks and Indians. There were long narrow counters. Indians pulled up to them on high stools, dusty ledgers in front of them. There was row after row of clerks—not a typewriter, not a machine—the men were dipping their pens into inkwells. Tai approached the single desk of one of the superiors in the front row. The man didn't stop work; he didn't have to. He was sitting in grand idleness when we entered. He didn't rise; he talked with Tai at length. I couldn't hear their words but her voice was very British so I knew things weren't

starting well. She turned and swept away, I after her. "What did he say, Tai?" I was eager.

"We are in the wrong building."

Down the steps, across the good sized courtyard to the farthest away building we walked, single file. Neither of us realized at that moment that for the next three days we would be going up and down, back and across, never getting anywhere. "Batted back and forth like ping-pong balls," Tai said.

This time we went up four flights; I stopped to pant at the top and Tai said, "Akka, you will be dead." Again there was a large room full of men in close rows with dusty ledgers. That first morning we were directed to every building and we learned the pattern. Here were thousands of men, almost all idle. Once in a while I saw a brown hand with a pen move slowly along a page, but that was all. "Tai," I said, "All these men receive salaries. This is going to cost us money."

She replied sharply, "Akka, what do you mean?"

I was silent; Tai so meticulous in honesty couldn't face the hand-out in India. I should have insisted on putting money out then and there but I had never managed affairs.

Hot and angry, we climbed up and down until we were returned to the first desk. Tai held out her documents for sea freight, mine for air freight. Her voice was cold and clear and British. The man's face was impassive; page by page he again scanned the papers. Then calmly turning his head to the next desk, which was empty: "The man who has to sign your papers sits at this next desk. This is his day off. No one else can sign." Tai and I left frustrated.

Back at the Taj Mahal, Kumud's brother was waiting. Tai sent Mr. Pardhi's car and driver away although he pressed to stay; she was in a high-handed mood. The brother deftly managed the bearers with our holdalls and bedding. He was young but already the astute Gujarati business man. He could see that we had been buying bedding since our purchases were not wrapped. Tai was telling him of my refusal of pillows, the cotton

smelling of mildew. Adroitly he reminded us that his family was in the textile business. They could supply us much cheaper and better than the bazaar; he could get cotton that would not smell. Could he bring samples? I was hot, tired, hungry. Bluntly I broke into the conversation saying, "Will you have lunch with us?" I don't know whether I transgressed etiquette or it was his clever planning but he said, "Thank you, I have just eaten. I will return in an hour with samples; then we can talk about my sister."

Lunch was a buffet in the main air-conditioned dining room. The food was lavish and delicious. We filled our plates. Tai had rice and sour cream curd to conclude her meal and I had ice cream. Both of us sighed, relaxed in the cool air. The elegant crowd—European, American, Indian—was like soft music to us. We felt alone and thankful for a cool rest.

The young man and a servant, his arms heaped with materials was at our door waiting on our return. Tai selected a tightly woven striped cotton cloth for the pillows and pad. She specified that the pad was to be thick. Many a time I was thankful for that thick cotton *as I lay on the hard thin layer of hair and leather on the trains—or on charpoys—never on American springs or mattresses.* He assured her that the cotton would be without odor. I urged more sheets; Tai gave in saying, "Akka, I suppose you will have to do your American ways."

The pillows, pads and extra sheets, and pillowcases were to be delivered to us the next day. That speed in this young man was the restless stirring of industrialism in India. That same push now was used on us. Tai had promised Kumud that if it was possible she would talk to her mother about the marriage. Now the brother said, "I will be plain with the matter. Kumud has given our mother no word of her love affair. But mother judges from the mention of this young man that it might be serious. Mother is worried; she is an invalid, a heart case. Kumud is the only daughter; we three brothers were settled with arranged marriages, happy

marriages. Oh, of course, there are some differences, but that always occurs. My brothers and I wish for the happiness of our sister. She refused marriage before she left for the States. She has never loved. I cannot believe but that she would choose wisely. What is this affair?"

In my mind's eye I could see the tall, light brown young man (Tai would say "fair" as a great compliment) looking soberly at me as I snapped his picture with Tai and Kumud in Berkeley. Intelligent, serious—you could see in his person integrity, promise. Tai was very frank with the brother. She said at once that Kumud and the young man were very much in love; they wished to marry; they had asked her to carry the news to India and plead their cause. (Tai, I thought to myself, you think you have not been touched by the United States but you mention love before the suitability of the marriage.) Questions and answers were fast now. The young man was the same caste; he too was a Hindu and a Gujerati. He had his Ph.D. in chemistry. He was returning to a good college post, but neither one would marry without parental consent on both sides. Bluntly I asked, "What is the barrier to the marriage?" And Tai answered: "The young man's family lives about two hundred miles from Bombay and the families do not know one another."

Tai had told me how carefully ancestry is traced, how horoscopes are studied before any consideration was made of marriage, but it was strange with my United States background—of fancy catching the eyes of our youth, instantly passion catching fire, marrying with no thought of suitability or of support—to hear them going over the situation. The brother would say, "Since you tell me that the marriage is suitable—the caste, the religion, the position of his family (financial standing)—I am not opposed. I fear if my sister loves and does not marry that she will never consent to an arranged marriage. But the news must be broken to my mother and she must be persuaded." His car was outside. He could take us at once. Tai began talking about 'to-morrow'; I thought of all the engagements ahead

but I kept silent. The brother did have a way with him for soon we were in his car which he drove himself.

Out we went through the suburbs; it was a long drive. There were some apartment buildings with balconies with saris hung out to dry, and bungalows with bits of trampled yards. There were ragged looking shrubs, cannas and a few trees that looked as if they did not enjoy city life. The brother tried to entertain us by promises of a visit to Bombay's model dairy, Airey Dairey, but Tai was restive, and I too felt this visit was too much.

At last, we drew into a driveway. There were more than the usual number of shrubs, but they were just as unkempt as the others. The bungalow with white plastered walls had nothing to distinguish it. We entered in. The mother evidently expecting us, was a slight, dark woman, her hair in a tight knot. She wore a soft white sari, and she was half lying on pillows in a big wooden chair, the back and seat of wicker. Her sari covered her feet which were up on a stool. Both of us made namaste to her. She made a small sign to us. Her face bore a look of anxiety and grief. She said with that old, old cry, "My daughter, what news of my daughter?" The tears began to slip out; she held the palu of her sari to her face for a minute.

Tai pulled a chair close to her, the brother going to the mother's other side. Gently he said, "Mother, this is good news." Tai drew people to her with the warm radiance of her smile, but now her tender, wise inner self reached out to this mother—old, ill, so unable to understand and face changing times. "Your daughter Kumud is well. She has passed high in her examinations."

The mother broke in, "But will she ever come home again?" The mother had not the strength or courage to question, "Does she think anything of marriage?" Tai said directly, "He is a Hindu." The mother put the palu over her face. She could not have us see her naked emotion. "He is a Gujarati, your caste. He is well settled. His name is Devdralal. He is from Surat. Your

daughter is coming home in a matter of months. She will not marry without your consent." The mother put down her palu. This had been a tremendous shock, but the brother had said she suspected a love affair. Her relief that he was a Hindu, same caste, same state, strengthened her. She sat forward. "But we do not know his family."

Tai looked at her gravely. "His family are feeling the same. He too will not marry without his family's consent." Thus Tai brought in the familiar pattern: negotiations between the families, the dutiful daughter, the dutiful son.

The brother began—"We can arrange; distance is not so much now."

Tai opened her money bag pouch. "I have his picture." The mother's hand reached out, almost snatched it as she put her head back on her pillow. Her breath was in short gasps. She looked long, the tears starting again, and she covered her face. I could see now the wisdom of the picture. There stood the tall young man. His lineage could be read in his appearance by any Indian but beside him was Tai, the older woman, experienced, reliable, a proper go-between for the marriage. The young couple caught up with love as we know it had managed to keep the semblance of the pattern of old marriage ways to ease this mother.

The brother mentioned tea. At once it was brought. This would conclude our visit, but still there were questions and answers. We drank our tea quickly and with the brother's deft help made namastes and were soon away. I had not engaged in the conversation but how like a tale it was: the dismay, the opposition of the parent, but there would be consent. Now Tai demurred about the visit to the model dairy farm. After all, she had been at a university where that was commonplace but the young man swept us along.

The Airey Dairey supplied most of the milk for Bombay; the buildings, the machinery were the latest. We passed the old dairy. It was an unbelievable shambles of falling wood buildings, tumbled brick and con-

crete, buffalos and filth. I kept looking back at it. I had seen thin, dirty cows in the United States long years ago but nothing like this. The young man looked ahead to Airey Dairey high on a hill before us with a fringe of palm trees, winding concrete roads, neat pastures, beds full of flowers, clean white barns with tile roofs. Briskly the young man got out at the office to ask permission. He came back a little dashed. The buffalos were being milked; there would be no more visitors admitted that day. Tai and I at once made a good deal over the grounds of the dairy and spoke at length of how wonderful it was for Bombay to have sanitary milk. On our drive back to the city, Tai launched out on her story of the cow she had seen when she stayed two weeks on a farm in Oregon. I had heard the story before, but now I was to hear it many times. She always started with the cow's udder—"So big, as big as a Dhobi's bag of wash. It was horrible. It was so big the cow could not lie down and she could not even stand in comfort." Even with Tai's known truthfulness and reliability, the amount of milk, twenty four quarts, three times a day, could not be comprehended. This must be a freak, there must be a trick; they must slip some water into the milk. Tai would say, "No, I personally watched that cow being milked for two weeks. Every time she gave that amount." Then she would produce her picture of the cow, herself standing beside it. Then she would say, "Their cows are not graceful and beautiful like our cows, but that American cow had a very proud look."

The brother expressed his appreciation of our visit to his mother. Like Indians he did not use the catch word "thank you," but he made us feel his gratitude, and he assured us that he would deliver our bedding at noon the next day.

Tai rested and I wrote my first letter from India. I seemed so far from my children, but there was a familiarity in life here. My dreams, the books I had

read, Tai's closeness to me made it seem as if I too had come back to India.

After dinner that evening, we found Ushe, the brother-in-law and their children waiting in our room. They were followed by Mr. Pardhi, Shiela and the young sister, and later Dr. Joshi came. The evening followed the fatiguing pattern of the previous one. There was no communication between the various groups except through us. The brother-in-law pressed us about our experiences at customs and seemed rather pleased that his prophecies of difficulty had come true. Ushe sat sweet and shy, her daughter, Asha, half drawn back beside her, her eyes cast down. Ushe's son, Mohan, came and stood by me and asked if I had had letters with stamps that day. Ushe produced the layered container again when the tea Tai had ordered was brought by the bearer. Mr. Pardhi insisted that we have the car again in the morning to go to customs. I kept looking at his shoes; I had remembered what his shoes—so fine, so shiny brown—made me think of. It was a story I had read as a child, "The Wide, Wide World." The part I liked best was about a morocco box. Mr. Pardhi's shoes were from morocco leather. Shiela was sitting beside Tai, clinging to her. (Tai said to me, "She is just a few little bones.") While Indians didn't touch one another, casual contacts occurred and Tai read these as she did palms. Shiela was like a fragrant flowering vine. The young sister clung to Shiela. Dr. Joshi was silent. They stayed until I was numb with fatigue; at last they left in the same order as the evening before. Tai's sister and family were expecting us to call on them the next afternoon, the Pardhi's claiming us for a call in the evening. Dr. Joshi extended the invitation to lunch at the Cricket Club and bade us formal good-bye as soon as the others were gone. Alone, Tai said, "Akka, poor thing, you are exhausted. When we reach Nagpur you can rest before we go to Kashmir."

The next morning we hurried along with dressing and breakfast, Tai keeping track of the time. We went out the back entrance of the Taj. There was a wide circle drive where taxis could wait. The doorman, white starched with sash and turban of red, ushered us away, opening the door of Mr. Pardhi's car.

Tai turned up her watch again as we drew up to the four large forbidding piles of brick buildings that were customs. "Exactly nine today," she said triumphantly. Out we got and in we swept. Not a person in sight, the place seemed deserted. We looked again at the sign: "Customs open 9 P.M. to 4 A.M." Tai began to steam, I to sooth. Around the side of the building there was a lone sweeper in dirty loin cloth squatting in the litter, half-beardedly brushing with his short ragged twig broom. Tai exchanged a few words with him. She turned to me with disgust. "They do not come before 10, better 10:30; an hour and a half to wait. What shall we do, Akka?"

"Why don't we go to the American Export office and see what news there is of the ship with your baggage?"

Tai began to argue. "That office will not be open either."

"They are Americans and will be open," I argued back.

We looked up the address. It was near. Tai flounced back to the car, got in, leaned forward and gave the address to the driver. We found the sign "American Export Lines" in a neat row of brick office buildings. All the signs were those of ship's companies. Inside in the big room everything was ship-shape too. It was cool, fans were pushing the air around, and there were air conditioners in several windows. There were many desks, Indians at them, their Parker pens moving rapidly, writing or checking on papers. One corner was shut off with a high railing. We were led inside

this and seated on brown leather chairs; it was the main office. I explained who we were and that we were asking about baggage shipped by the American Export Line. A bluff older American, looking as if he had had early seasoning at sea, came over and shook hands with us smiling, telling us that he knew my friend who had charge of American Export piers at Jersey City and who had received the baggage from American Express and put it on a ship so that it would reach India, not too early, not too late.

"Everything has come out just right; your baggage reached here five days ago. We inspected it carefully. It was delivered to customs that same day in perfect order. I can give you duplicate copies of our delivery order to customs and of their receipt."

Tai and I were beaming. This was the way things worked out for us, falling neatly into place. The manager offered us tea. I refused to save Tai the embarrassment of explaining that she did not drink tea. He smiled again, his warm, hearty American way was persuasive. "Lemon squash?" Tai and I said in unison, "That will be pleasant." We laughed and chatted in the cool room over the cool drink. He chided us, teasing that we would not be having trouble if we ourselves had traveled on American Export. We teased him that their ships were not in Pacific waters.

The heat struck us when we stepped outside. The green leather cushions in the car were hot and started to stick to us. At once things were not pleasant again. When we drove up to customs I said, "Dungeons, that's what they are, Tai." She was not wasting time in talk with me; I had to walk fast to keep up with her. Now in the inner court, Indian men were standing idly about. Some had white shirts and pajamas, some were in khaki shirts and trousers and some in wool coats and white dhotis. The Indian gypsy girl (Tai half denied that there were Indian gypsies, then did admit wandering tribes) flashed her way in and out among the men, her bangles tinkling. She was a little beauty. Her dark eyes flirted, her black hair hung loose and long over her

shoulders. She tossed her head as she walked, making her hair shine in the sun; she smiled and her white teeth flashed. Her choli was a tight scrap of cloth holding her gently budding breasts. There was a wide strip of brown skin at her midriff with a tight round little navel. My eyes swept down to the billowing red skirt and caught the glint of silver on the girl's slender ankles as she ran in and out of sight. A little sister in her dirty frock ran crying after her.

We stood a minute in the shade of the building. It was so hot that that brief sprint in had made us breathless. Tai felt confident about her baggage now, but how should we proceed? It seemed best for her to go upstairs and get the signature of the man who had been away yesterday. Tai suggested that I wait in the shade while she climbed the stairs. This was her baggage so my signature would not be needed. I went to the door and watched Tai's light progress up that high, crumbling, turning stair. Tai, so Indian, soaring up, unmindful of the ruins under her feet. I let my practical American mind go on up with her, floor after floor. There were men, thousands of Indian men. "Tai," I said to myself, "This is India. Ruins of the past, today too many people." My philosophical thoughts stopped abruptly. I started looking at the family living under the stairs.

In all the four customs buildings, yesterday, I had seen a little huddle of people under the stairs on each and every flight. This one, I assumed, was the gypsy girl's family. There was a four foot space between the outer wall and the stairs to allow for their turning upward. There was a high barred window in the wall. The space led back, head high and turned on itself back under the stair. Squatted on this bit of floor was the family, leaning against the wall, lolling in every position, brown, ragged, dirty but with that mystery that belongs to gypsies. Under the window sat the woman, the mother; a full brown breast fell down—a baby in her lap clinging to it. Her wide skirt spread out to make a little softness for a little boy, almost a baby too, staring

watch. We would barely have time to meet our engagements. We walked away as fast as we had come in but this time our cheeks were flaming with anger.

After we were in the taxi on the way to Tai's sister's apartment, she began making me understand what to expect. "I feel that my brother-in-law could do better by living quarters, but Ushe does not demand. Of course there are expenses to look forward to. Next year they will have Mohan's thread ceremony and for an only son that will be a big affair and then there is his education to be provided. And Asha is bright; she must have something for education. Times are changing so; perhaps her marriage will not be such a burden. Lawyers in India do not live on a grand scale. And in Bombay rents are high and living difficult. Of course they live comfortably. Ushe is such a good cook." I murmured appreciation; the Indian dainties she had brought had been delicious. Tai went on. "Of course there will be no curtains, no furnishings as you know them." Tai and I had explored the various differences between East and West, with home furnishings we had decided climate was what made East's windows without curtains but with shutters against the sun; without rugs but with tile or cement for coolness; without upholstered furniture but with cane furniture so air could circulate; without ovens, but with a spark of fire in a brazier not holding heat.

The boy and girl came running to the taxi to welcome us, and other children gathered. Ushe was on the balcony making a warm, deep namaste, for her elder sister and for me. Neighbors clustered about and there were some shyly peeping from behind shutters. This was my first call in an Indian home but Tai had reminded me this was the first time too that a foreigner had been in her sister's home—and after all it was just eight years ago that Gandhi had broken the castes; even now I must not enter the kitchens. We went up the stairs, narrow and winding, and came out on the second story balcony. The one window and the door panes were of colored glass so that we could not see in. The

apartment was a row of rooms opening one from another without a hall. It was an end one and so it had the advantage of windows along the side. These windows were clear glass with inside wooden shutters. We were seated in the second room, in a couple of cane chairs. Between the windows was a couch bed. Tai told me that there were private toilet arrangements in the back of the house and also a private balcony where the family slept most of the year. Ushie was showing one of her treasures, a wardrobe copied from an English one that had been her father's. "There are coats to be disposed of," she said.

My curious eyes could not keep from observing the room. There were no curtains, no rugs. The walls were dingy (of course they would be freshly whitewashed in a matter of weeks for Divali—that was a yearly custom and in a city in a year dust came in). There was a hand-woven cover on the couch like the bedspreads for our holdalls. There were a couple of trunks piled on one another and under the couch and on the floor a dusty accumulation of books and papers and oldments. In the corner was a flat desk with a shelf beneath quite like a school desk, spilling over with books and papers.

The brother-in-law had come puffing up the steps. He, as usual, was full of talk of legal business that must be attended. He flung himself on the couch. Tai drew herself up even before he let loose on her with questions about customs. There was the welcome distraction of the children. Mohan was showing me his stamp collection and taking me through it stamp by stamp. Asha was squatted at Tai's side, showing her portfolios of drawings. Tai curtly told the brother-in-law that my suitcase was there; my papers were in order, but there were continual excuses—asking for other signatures, delays. And by going to the American Export office we had discovered that Tai's baggage was not "In the sea" as Customs had blandly told us, but had been delivered to customs a week before. Tai said to him, "What is the meaning of this?" It was a good thing that Ushie brought the tea at that moment. Tai turned the con-

versation, this time to the children, their textbooks, their papers. They began bringing them, the boy from the desk stuffed so full. The girl too produced her schoolwork.

The father said proudly, "Mohan at this early age has his own desk for study."

No mention was made of arrangements for the girl. I suppose just as she squatted beside Tai now, she squatted to study. Ushe's position in the home was clearly that of the old time Indian woman, although she had had early education. Ushe did not sit while we were in the house; she was busy serving the tea with an elaborate accompaniment of sweets. The rest of the time she stood ready to serve.

We were there quite a long time. Tai did not mention our next call to Sir Pandit—she had given intimation to Ushe at the hotel, but this part of Tai's life was really a closed book to her family.

Tai asked to have our car called, terminating our call. It seemed abrupt to me but all of the family followed us to the car. I devoted myself to Ushe. She was sweet but still too shy to try to speak to me in English. The children spoke excitedly of tomorrow. The family was to have dinner with us at the hotel and see us off at the railway station. The brother-in-law spoke portentously of customs, but Tai did not answer. She did not have hope of getting her baggage for some time, but she did not want to agree with him. The children and Ushe made deep namastes. The brother-in-law, Tai and I made small ones, and we were off.

Bondura was not too far from the bay and the marine drive that would take us to Sir Pandit's home. We had received a note from him expressing his sorrow that he had not been able to welcome us on arrival. It had included his name, Sir C. B. Pandit, and the name of his residence, "Leela." A telephone call had followed his letter, telling Tai that Sir Pandit was confined to his bed again with a recurring heart difficulty. Would she be so kind as to come to him and so gracious as to bring me with her?

Tai talked about him as we rode along. It was the same as with Dr. Joshi; Dr. Ghate and Sir Pandit had worked together as young men under the Gaekwar of Baroda. But Sir Pandit had come from a wealthy family and had many years ago come to Bombay and established himself as one of the leading bankers. In the United States Tai had never told me of these men. She had said, "My family has no money, but we are an old family and a very good one, and I do have many friends." She had continued, "Akla, I have friends from the lowest to the highest rank. I am received in huts and in homes of wealth. Many of my friends are powerful. But it has been a pride with me to stand on my own merits. I have never asked or received favors."

The bungalows and apartments ceased and we were driving by the large homes, set back among trees—some of them palms—and there were views through the wide gates in the surrounding walls of gardens, hedges, trimmed shrubs, beds riotous with flowers.

The taxi driver was going slowly, looking for the name "Leela" on the gates. Tai said, "It is very close now." She went on to tell me intimate details of this family. Sir Pandit's wife was dead; his sister kept his house. He had a devoted only daughter married and living very near. His heart—she shook her head a little—had been broken by the death of his only son, but Sir Pandit's spirit had not been broken; it was indeed a noble one.

The gate posts that bore the name "Leela" seemed higher and larger than all the others. The fine iron grill-work gates stood open. We entered on a circling drive of crushed rock in perfect order. Tai added one last word. "Sir Pandit built this home when he came to Bombay. His family was raised here."

The house stood three stories high, of brick white-washed with stucco. It was large and impressive but with the simplicity of line and the perfect detail that a skilled architect can give a structure. It had the closed face of a wealthy banker's home: the dignity, the pride, the reserve. On the driveway stood two tall dark ser-

vants in spotless white with red turbans. One opened a door of the car for Tai; one opened a door for me. The single step to the house was wide and as long as a terrace and banked with golden chrysanthemums, the pots in serried rows making their own pattern. Tai wore a sari of green silken gauze with a narrow border of golden threads. This was one of her very special saris. I wondered why she had chosen to wear it in the heat and dust of Bombay. Now I knew. I was thankful Tai had me in the discreet, long sleeved, fitted high jacket, skirt in gored fullness, of my gray, silk suit. My white gloves and little black velvet hat Tai insisted on as an Americanism.

Waiting in the wide doorway was a little brown Indian woman, her rich brown silk sari the color of her skin. Tai made a deep namaste touching the woman's foot. This was the first time I had seen Tai pay this honor. The woman replied with the usual namaste (she was older than Tai, as old as I). But impassive as was her face, I was aware that Tai was very welcome here. Tai introduced me saying "This is Sir Pandit's sister."

I made the usual namaste, then smiled and said, "How do you do." I too felt welcome.

She said, "Sir Pandit has asked to have you brought to him at once." Tai and she engaged in a quick, brief conversation.

Tai turned to me—"The sister asks you to forgive her poor use of English. Sir Pandit is still in his bed, but today he is better; he insists upon seeing us."

We walked up wide steps of well polished wood, a graceful handrail curving with us. The hall above, like the one below, had a floor of tiny patterned tile, but here on the long wall there was a niche with a wall fountain, the water cascading into a shallow, half oval basin banked cool with various green ferns. The steps wound on up, the railings giving the open feeling of balconies at the different floor levels. A wide central door was before us. Tai and the sister entered together, I following.

Tai turned her face back to me. "This is Sir Pandit's study."

I kept the indrawing of my breath as silent as possible. I was in an enormous rectangle of a room, my feet on a soft deep dark blue Persian carpet, three walls of the room heavy from floor to ceiling with books, but the fourth wall of windows was open to the ocean, blue as the sky above it.

A voice firm and commanding called from the next room. We were summoned. Here too my feet were on soft carpets. Heavy mahogany furniture lined the walls. There was a bed—simple, slender mahogany with high posts. Against pillows piled high, sat Sir Pandit; his dignity, his impressive personality undiminished by being bedfast. His face was large, impassive, bronzed. His frame, tall and large, seemed to need the support of the pillows, but his eyes were full of sparks of life and his hands were outstretched. Tai moved quickly forward. He shut her slender hands close in his long, darker ones. "Tai, Tai." Tai drooped her head but did not speak. He disengaged one hand and held it out to me. "Mrs. Armstrong, you are Tai's friend and Dr. Ghate's."

The sister did not move or speak, but I could feel her concern; this emotion was too deep for the heart. I moved my eyes from his to the deep view of the sea for the bedroom wall was open too to the ocean.

"I will always remember looking at the sea and the sky from your window," I said simply. His hand was still clinging to mine. I took it in both of mine and wished my gloves were not between us. My face took on that distant graveness (my early American look). This hand was like another I had known—firm strength, unusual ability, hidden tenderness—but my eyes down, my head bowed now like Tai's, I could see here in the pale color of the palms and pallor of the fingers, the frailty of health I had seen in my husband's hands.

The sister was pushing a chair up to the bed. Tai as usual in emotional crises took instant command. "Akka," she said, her face in that lovely smile, a smile so warm with feeling but so calm, "Sir Pandit and I

must talk a little." Her smile, her voice had broken the spell.

Sir Pandit said, "When you come again, Mrs. Armstrong, I hope that I will be free from my bed and can entertain you properly. It would give me pleasure if you would care to look at my art treasures, at my books. How I would enjoy showing them myself." I said eagerly that it would give me pleasure to see them. He mentioned an ancient figure of Siva to show me especially and instructed the sister to take me to the roof terrace for the view. "I want you to remember the Indian Ocean."

Tai was talking to him before we were out of the room, her chair drawn close. Their faces were turned to one another—I too knew what this deep, this sentient friendship meant for I too had it with Tai. Part, of course, was her own rare self but most of it was India.

Back in the study, I stood again at the window looking at the sea. It was a calm, clear view. My eyes followed out and out where sea and sky met in the infinity of space.

The sister and I exchanged few words. I was as shy and frozen as she was except to make exclamations of appreciation. We went into the adjoining room, the one matching Sir Pandit's. Our feet were sinking into Persian softness on this floor too. There was another wide window to the sea, more easy chairs and, ranging the walls, glass cases with shelves filled with bronzes, Siva dancing and all the many Indian Gods and Goddesses. The sister pushed back one of the sliding glass doors. It was crystal clear and did not obstruct vision but the sister made an explanation, "Sea air, bronze." Some did have a patina of verdigris but here were treasures in loving care. I moved about looking at them I longed for Sir Pandit's explanations about their significance, their age, and I longed to see his glowing pleasure in this museum collection of bronzes.

The sister did not hurry me, but I knew it was not her habit to loiter. Back through the calm, lovely study to the hall, out to the stairs I hadn't noticed as we

came in that there were translucent panes of green glass above the fountain. They made an eerie light. Sir Pandit could not see the fountain from his study, but when the wide door stood open he could hear the soft water music. We went up polished wood steps. The next floor had many doors opening from the tiled hall. The sister made no explanation but these I knew would be bedrooms. She didn't stop for breath but went up the third flight, I after her. Here the tiled hall was a small room from which we walked directly to a roof terrace that covered the whole big house. The floor was sea green tile, dipping into shallow gutters at the edge. The brick, white stucco walls of the house came up to make a solid railing. The sun was blazing down but there was an arrangement so that canvas could be pulled over a section to make a roof for shade. There were tables, chairs, sofas, chaise longues, wrought iron with deep green cushions. I thought how cool it would be at night when one could hear the gentle lap of the waves, see the ocean, misty below, and look out at the stars in the open sky.

I walked over to the railing and looked down. It didn't seem possible that I had not observed the two garden terraces from the study, but opening directly from the first floor was a wide elegant terrace. It was paved with cut stone and furnished with rare plants and small trees in pots. Quite far below it was another terrace, a garden terrace enclosed in a high clipped hedge. I could look down from the roof into it but from the house the lower terrace was quite hidden. It was full of flowers in bloom. In the center was a fountain with an oval pool. Its sparkling jet was low, not higher than the hedge. There was white furniture, the French kind with metal backs and bottoms like round pillows, and there was quite a large glass-topped table. I could imagine starched white-clothed, dark faced servants carrying tea to this gay, fragrant retreat.

Beyond, sand sloped gently down to the sea. The house seemed to stand alone in its beauty. But to each side, almost hidden by trees and shrubs, were other

houses. Palm trees thrust themselves up in the foliage and some crept out and stood alone. This foliage was a darker green, the sea a deep blue, the sky cloudless. The palms stood straight. "India," I said to myself; this was a beautiful view of India.

We walked down three flights of polished wood, through the entrance hall into the main room of the house, a drawing room. It was all pale beige, soft, deep carpet, panelled walls, French furniture in light tapestries and fruitwood—a cool, elegant room. Banks of French doors opened onto the terrace; I walked over for the view. The terrace outside matched the room, elegant simplicity. There was a line of green beyond, the sunken, hidden gardens, I knew, and a strip of ocean and sky but not the wide view of the upper rooms. The sister moved on into the adjoining room. It was a large dining room in proper English style: table, chairs, sideboard in heavy mahogany. Back in the drawing room, the sister motioned me to sit. She was silent and I let my mind roam back through the house. It was so perfect, so beautiful; it was Sir Pandit. There wasn't anything in the house that was not of his choosing, for his comfort, his enjoyment. And he must have dominated the architect for the structure of the house as well as Sir Pandit. What keen intelligence, what love of beauty, what force to have achieved this in India. It seemed as if we sat a long time before there was the distant tinkle of a bell. The sister looked at me; "Sir Pandit," she said.

I followed her up, through the study into his bedroom. Tai was standing by his bed; he had one of her hands and he held the other out to me. "When you come back to Bombay, I will be up to entertain you." I murmured quick appreciation of the beauty of his home, my interest in his bronzes. Both Tai and I made deep namaste to him. He was still lying back on his pillows but he looked refreshed.

Down in the drawing room, the sister said, "Tea." She gave a quick clap of her hand and in came a white starched servant, red turbaned, carrying a silver tray with silver pot and thin cups. A second servant followed

with a second silver tray with several plates of sweets. The sister poured tea, poured milk into it and added many teaspoonfuls of sugar without asking my wish. I could feel Tai's amusement. She knew I liked nothing in tea and I knew that this was one of the Indian ways to which I would have to submit. Tai and the sister talked briskly in Marathi. Tai explained to me that the sister had made all the sweets herself. I exclaimed about their deliciousness. The sister did not smile, but she moved her head in a quick little nod to one side. We took a proper length of time over the tea but we did not dally. Tai stood up; I followed. In the hour's length of that call, I had become acquainted with Sir Pandit. I grieved to myself knowing that he would not enjoy this beauty long. Our taxi was waiting and servants stood by the car doors. We left the sister in the doorway. She made namaste to us, I to her, and again Tai swept tip and down in a low bow and touched the sister's foot. Both of us were emotional now but quiet. We didn't talk on the ride back to the Taj Hotel.

We had time to lie on our beds a few minutes but we had to have an early dinner. We had been pressed to eat so many sweets at both servings of tea and there would be more at Pardhi's so Tai and I chose plain, solid food. We were hardly back in our rooms when Mr. Pardhi came for us. We sat in the high back seat of the car on its shiny leather; Mr. Pardhi solemn, doing his father-in-law-duty by these friends of his son-in-law, sat in front with the driver. Mr. Pardhi had a thin, fine face. I wondered again about his circumstances. I had a vague idea he was a bookkeeper. As a young man he must have taken up some modern ways for he wore this threadbare frock coat and the handmade morocco leather shoes but he had kept some of the old for he wore a long white, extremely fine dhoti. The car was turning off into narrow old streets. There were crowds of Indians, men in every sort of attire: turbans, coats, shirts, shorts, dhotis, pajamas; women in saris of every color; a few little girls in frocks and many little boys shouting and running about. The streets were uneven

with cobblestones, the buildings close and high and crumbling. The car stopped and we got out. It seemed to me we were in a bazaar. It was very old and very poor.

Mr. Pardhi said, "We have to walk down a half block to the chowk. The street is too bad for the car."

We followed him, Tai grasping my arm. Tai whispered to me that this was one of the oldest sections of Bombay and that this would be a very old apartment building. High brick buildings, balconies on every floor crowded the narrow filthy street. The cobbles were large, many of them broken and there was an open gutter, smelling. People filled the balconies and the street was congested. I had to go slowly, the footing was so uncertain. Tai pinched my arm and whispered again. "Akka, now you are seeing India."

We went into the half blind entrance of the four story building, up dark, worn steps. Tai kept hissing in my ear, "Be careful, Akka." The steps were wide and shallow and there was a handrail. This had been polished by use but there were years of neglect of walls and stairway. There were a good many steps so I knew ceilings would be high. We came out into an inner balcony. Above us were the balconies for each floor. I could see below a courtyard, a dirty jumbled courtyard with women drawing water from a tap. The railing was an ornamental iron grill, fine work of long ago. It had a ledge and leaning on it were Indian women. It seemed to me as if most of them were bulging right out of their saris. Children were shrieking and running about. We made a sharp turn. The stairs went up in a continuous well. Traffic increased on the stairs; young men were running up and down with no thought of our slow plodding. At each floor there seemed to be more black heads looking over the rail, more spots of bright saris. The smells increased. There were fresh cooking smells and more than a hint of ancient rancid grease. Many of the women must have used strong perfumes, and there was more than an undercurrent of sewer smell. The noise was a turbulence. Tai whispered in my

ear, "Remember, I said American houses are so quiet." (Tai had always added, "*except* for the whine and whir and snap of your infernal machines.") I was panting and sweating hot by the time we reached the fourth floor. Tai was saying, "Akka, this is too much for you after such a long, hard day."

Mr. Pardhi was ahead of us but he couldn't hear our quiet words in that noise and confusion. On the last, the top floor, he turned to the right; half around the railing he opened a door, bowed and said, "This is our apartment," as if he was ushering us into Buckingham Palace.

We were in a dim small rectangle of a room. It had been dark on the stairs but this room was no lighter. Beside us was the fireplace, bricks black with soot. There were no logs but on the hearth was a small glow in two charcoal braziers set there. The length of the room was piled high with furnishings including trunks, bed stands with spindly legs jutting out. There was a narrow passage back to a window but the fading light outside did nothing to lighten this gloom. This I saw in a brief moment as we were ushered into the rectangular interior room. Here there was a feeble light, an electric bulb hanging from a cord. The walls were soft white. The floor was covered with white cotton cloth, its texture made it too a soft white. I saw no furnishings except two dark, straight, polished chairs, and along the length of the wall a white cotton covered pad with many pillows embroidered in pale rainbow colors. The one window was pale in the twilight. The room was so strange, I looked at it even as we received deep, foot-touching namastes from the sisters, which Tai and I returned with elder person's greetings. Shiela was in pale pink, the sister in pale blue. They were like wraiths, lengths of gauze from a pale rainbow.

I slipped out of my slippers and discovered that Tai had left hers at the first entrance. I could feel matting under the floor cloth, but there was padding under that too for it was quite soft. Tai and I were seated in the chairs while Shiela and the sister sat Hindu fashion on

the pad, their backs straight. The row of cushions were ornaments of women's hand work—not for use. Across the room an electric fan was blowing on us, just a waft of breeze, not the whirring gale of American fans. In the gloom I noticed on the other wall a long, low piece of polished furniture. It had a flat top like a table or a desk and was the height to use when sitting on the floor. There were two rows of drawers beneath.

Mr. Pardhi did not follow us into the room. This was the nest of his two doves. I do not think he ever set foot in it. Shiela and Tai conversed in Hindi. The sister seemed always a part of Shiela and like a shadow she said nothing. I too was silent. The girls did not try to talk to me; they accepted me in the convention of an Indian elder where silence would be expected. I knew there would be no chit-chat about Kale, Shiela's husband; Tai had given Mr. Pardhi full information about him at the hotel. And I knew that Shiela, in Hindu etiquette, would never say the name of her husband or talk about him in any way.

The chair was hard, my bones ached with fatigue, but I sat motionless. I had started discipline in my habits not only to make Tai proud of me but also to do credit to my country. I did let my back rest against the back of the chair, but I held it stiff, my knees tight together, my feet flat on the floor. I could hear my mother's voice in my ears, when I was a young girl: "A lady never lounges before other's eyes; she never lets her back touch the back of the chair; her hands are gently folded in her lap, her knees close together, feet flat on the floor. A lady never crosses her feet." My poor old back had to have support or so I told myself, but I now conformed in India to the other rules of the days when American women were ladies.

From the angle of my vision, I could see the corner of the hearth and the bit of glowing charcoal in the braziers. A dim white figure was squatted before them. Mr. Pardhi did not appear. The singsong of the voices Tai's and Shiela's, seemed endless but they were muted like the room. All at once the girls glided out of the

room and came back at once with plates and cups brimming with hot tea, milk and sugar already added. Now they brought plate after plate of dainties, hot tidbits, sweets, urging them on us. Tai ate a great deal; she enjoyed her familiar Indian treats. I did the best I could, but many of the flavors were strange and the hot tidbits were not only hot from the fire but tongue-searing with chili. The girls served us but did not take tea themselves. This I knew too from Tai was Indian serving fashion, young people not eating with their elders. I could see a number of dark shapes in the corner of the other room, but none of them was Mr. Pardhi. His white dhoti would have revealed him. The tea drinking seemed endless, but at last they took away our plates and cups.

I wondered how I could sit so motionless for another half hour because I knew that we must stay a proper time. But Tai said, "Shiela, show us your sketches." Shiela opened one of the shallow wide drawers of the low desk and took out a portfolio. Tai seated herself on the pad beside her. First there were still lifes, pencil drawings of ancient brass and enamel pieces. Tai said, "We start our art students on still life." The sketches were passed up to me; there were many of them. Still life in color followed, then Indian women in water color, delicate pale tints in their saris. The women were wraith-like, graceful, like Shiela. Tai was praising her. There was a delicacy and a charm, a depth to this paleness, so different from old Rajput painting, so different from the modern Indian garish colors of women at wells or the gaudy colors of women dancing. Shiela's head was bowed a little; she was shy about the praise. At last we were through the portfolio and it was put back in the drawer.

Tai rose. "We must go." Shiela protested, the sister echoing. We expressed our pleasure in being in their home; again we exclaimed over the delicacies of the tea. The girls made deep namastes to us again and I slipped into my shoes. As we crossed the corner of the other room, I could see a number of young men hud-

dled against the wall—servants? helpers? neighbors? prospective suitors for the sister? Shiela must have had a good dowry or something special to offer a husband for Kale was an outstanding student and man. We left the girls standing, the sister's arm around Shiela, supporting her in the doorway of their doves' nest. Their voices too had the soft quality of doves as they whispered good-bye.

Mr. Pardhi appeared in front of us as we went out into the outer hall. Now the railing was crowded full; the voices were a babel; the children were running, heads were turning; people were pushing. I realized with dismay that I was the object of their interest, but no one came close to me. They just stared. Down the dark steps we plunged, Tai cautioning and holding on to me. The steps were full of people coming and going. At each balcony level now there was a crowd gaping. There was an undercurrent of dismay with the excitement. Was I the first non-Hindu to enter this chowk? Would religious rites have to cleanse it after me? I had not touched the hearth but I had walked across the corner of the kitchen.

It was very dark when we came out on the street, just a slit between the crumbling brick chowks but full of people. Mr. Pardhi began to explain; this was Dussera, the week of honoring Ganesha, the elephant headed god, son of Situ. He wanted us to see their neighborhood display of images. Tai protested—it was late and I was very tired—but he persisted. We would pass the house chosen for the display: it would take only a minute and it would be an unusual sight for me to see. There were balconies up the faces of some of the chowks, but they were dark. A radio blared out Indian music in its quarter tones. The woman's nasal voice made only small movements up and down the scale in the love ballad, but her voice moved and trembled as if it were a nautch dancer. Again we went into a hidden doorway and up a dark stair. This one had no rail, it was narrow and it seemed as if each step might collapse with us and we were jostled by running children. We

came out on a narrow balcony on the front of the chowk. On a swing were perched Indian women. Mr. Pardhi made namaste to them and said a few words but did not introduce us.

We went directly into a brightly lighted narrow hall. It was bare and dirty, but on a row of tables, close together, there was a row of Ganeshes—large ones, small ones, painted clay, brass. I realized then we were in a line of people, slowly pushing forward. On one of the tables there was a plate with some flat wafers, some coins beside them. Tai took one of the wafers, put down some annas. Now we entered a fairly large room, also brightly lighted. It had a bare wooden floor and was lined with rough shelves, some making room for Ganeshes half the size of a person, some crowded with small figures. Before each figure were piled fruit and cakes. We pushed slowly along in the line. There were figures of wood, archaic, carved and painted; there were figures in bronze and brass; there were enormous figures crude in clay, garish in color; these were for the procession and the immersing. There were porcelain Ganeshes and a few Staffordshire dogs with limpid spaniel eyes. These gentle brown people in the line ahead of me were looking at their gentle brown god with affection. Ganesh was amusing to me with his little boy body and elephant head, but he personified wisdom and devotion to them.

On one of the narrow shelves quite by itself was a silver Ganesh sitting in a silver swing I knew before Tai stopped and made namaste that she would leave her offering before this silver god. She had had one like him. It had been one of her great treasures. On the first Indian Independence Day, when she and her sons were out celebrating, their house was looted and Ganesh and his swing as well as the rest of her silver was taken. It was justice to open the jails and let all the prisoners loose that day when India was freed, but there was a lot of looting.

The room was unbearably hot; the shelves crossed the shut windows; hair oil, sweet incense—Indian odors

—were strong. Tai fanned herself with the Hongkong sandalwood fan she has been carrying. "It is stifling," she said. Her keen nose recoiled from odors more than did mine.

Out on the street, it was no better. Here was added the stench of the open sewer. Crowds of people were coming toward us now on their way to see the display of Ganesh images. Tai explained that this was a yearly festival; someone in the neighborhood would strip a room; everyone would bring his figures and make a display, then the week would climax in a procession, each neighborhood vying with the others with a float to carry the big clay Ganeshes, the clay Ganeshes to be immersed in water at the conclusion of the procession. Tai was gripping me tight as we walked over the rough cobbles; I was relieved when we emerged into the wider street and I could climb in and rest on the leather cushions. Mr. Pardhi talked at the car door. He would send the car for our use in the morning. He hoped we would be more fortunate in customs; none of the Indian people regarded it as unusual that we had trouble in customs. Having been under the heel of the British for two hundred years they expected and accepted restrictions. He urged us to stay longer in Bombay so that we could see the sights. Tai quickly thanked him for the evening and for the car. She was as eager as I to be asleep under the fans in the Taj Mahal Hotel.

4

In the morning, we had our breakfast and packed our bags ready for departure before we started the struggle over our baggage at customs again.

When we drew up to customs for the third time, we sat in Mr. Pardhi's car; we couldn't bear to begin again. It was 10:30. We had to be back at the Taj at 12:30 for Dr. Joshi to pick us up for luoch at the Cricket Club.

We had our tickets for the evening train. We were two angry women as we stalked into customs. I barely glanced at the gypsies. We started with Tai's baggage. The first man was curt with us. He explained that we did not have the proper papers. Perhaps if we went on to someone else? We went on, we too now had been more than curt in our replies. The next man was insolent—Tai exploded. She called down the wrath of the government on customs. She said in no uncertain terms that customs in Bombay were notorious over all India. What would this American think and report when she returned to the United States of America? The man stood taking it. Tai said, "Let us go, Akka!"

"But your baggage, Tai, how can we leave?"

Tai said decisively, "This cannot be helped; we have tried enough. I will have to leave it in my brother-in-law's hands."

I flamed. "That will do for you, Tai, but I am an American citizen. I do not do your ways. I have my papers—I will have my suitcase!"

Down the steps I fairly ran, Tai after me—out to the side shed. The big brown Indian got up from behind his desk. He could see the fire in my eyes. I looked at him, my lips in a tight line. I was grinding my teeth. "I want my suitcase now. How much do you want?"

Tai broke in. "Akka, Akka, you can't do this!"

I looked as coldly at her as at the man. "This is my time, Tai; I am an American citizen."

The man said in a loud voice for he was angry too, "I can't take—"

I broke in—"How much?" He looked at me; I was boiling mad. I turned. "I'm going to the American consul." Off I ran towards the car, Tai and the man after me. My rage came to a white heat, but I was thinking very clearly. The man's voice had a little less certain tone the last time when he said. "I can't take—" If I got him on the far side of the car where they couldn't see him from the customs house, it could be managed.

The driver was standing, holding the door, but I

dashed around the other side and waited in the street. The man followed me—I looked at him.

Firmly, but in a low voice, I said, "How much?" He turned his head away; the driver must not hear.

"Thirty-five rupees," he whispered.

I opened my shoulder bag and in an instant I had the money in his hands.

"You will have to sign papers," he said.

Tai and I followed him back to the customs shed; he sat at his desk and began a loud protesting—this was highly irregular, but I had this special tourist card from the Government of India—at the same time swiftly making out the papers. He pointed to the line; I signed. He called for the keys. A khaki-clothed servant came running, opened the lock. I stepped into the chicken wire cage. He opened my big suitcase for inspection but didn't move a thing, just shut the lid and told the servant to carry it to the car. I was thankful it was not Indian style to say "thank you." Sweat was running down from his temples when we left.

In the car, Tai rocked herself a little back and forth, her face sad. "Oh, Akka, what will you think of India with an introduction like this?" I felt good but I had to save Tai's pride.

"Tai, you always tell me human nature is the same the world over. We have things like this in the United States. After all, there are many men there in customs, desperate to make a living; India has so little money and these men must have money from somewhere." I took hold of Tai's hand. I thought, "Tai has not called on Krishna to help her. She prays for his help in danger, but she does not ask for material things."

It was a relief when we were in our room and the offending suitcase could be shut out of view in the wardrobe. Tai was still hurt. Pride in her country was strong in her. It didn't bother her that I had offered the bribe (that was for my American conscience) but she was shamed to have the evident, wide-scale corruption in customs laid bare to my eyes.

We were late for Dr. Joshi, but a note was waiting

for us saying that he had been delayed. Tai elegant in a sari of Dacca muslin, a green mist said "Akka, are you ready?" Tai avoided the word hurry. I buttoned my suit jacket, my fingers fast but with the arthritic awkwardness of an elder American. "Let me see you." Tai always inspected me, never praising. I held my head up with the little black velvet tam on it. I had put on the Italian silk tweed suit. It was tight and narrow but conservative. My white gloves and high heels were my best.

There was a knock. Tai said, "Come," and the servant ushered in Dr. Joshi.

He looked always the same: tall, dark, spotless, fresh-pressed. The only things not British about him were his brown Indian skin and the absence of a hat. He even carried a tightly furled umbrella, the handle caught over his arm, held close to him. He shook hands with us and expressed concern over the delay, an unavoidable emergency. We went out the front entrance of the Taj: the doorman salaamed low as we got into the gleaming British car. The driver was in a dark green uniform, almost a British livery, but it was topped with a yellow turban. We whirled through the streets. I had glimpses of India Gate, the British-looking buildings, the big statue of Victoria in white swathed in black. We drove into the grounds of the Cricket Club so fast I had only glimpses of a spreading, low white building, half hidden by well-trimmed shrubs, and the perfect grass that was the cricket field. A graveled drive brought us to a wide, open terrace.

Two servants were salaaming. I thought the servants at the Taj were white-starched, but these were whiter and stiffer. Dr. Joshi walked straight ahead to the dining room. It was almost deserted. The servant half behind Dr. Joshi said, "Perhaps on the terrace, Sir." Dr. Joshi turned to Tai and me, "What would be your pleasure?"

I replied, for Tai would never make a choice, "The terrace sounds delightful."

The terrace was cool and not touched by the sun. Out well beyond the shadow of the club lay the green of the field. The grass was dark green like a good emer-

aid and it had the cared for, precious quality of a gem. The tables were covered with pale green cloth and the chairs—all really lounge chairs with arms—had soft, dark green seat pads; they were of an intricate, expensive wicker weave. Dr. Joshi and Tai ate Indian food but in proper British style with knives and forks. I tentatively had mentioned salad. Tai did not say a word or make a sign, but I had promised her I would follow "cooked foods" and fruit when I myself unpeeled it," so I lightly said, "Oh, I'll have chicken curry. Not hot with chili, please." That was to please Tai because she frowned on my eating spiced foods. We sat quietly enjoying the luxury; just a few men were still at their tables. We were quite late, I was glad to see and enjoy this bit of India as the English did.

Dr. Joshi had spent every possible minute with us since we had been in Bombay, but he was a silent man. I had made some tentative attempts at conversation; I had said, "My husband was a physician; he was much interested in the Indian drug *serpasil*. It has had a great vogue in the United States." "Yes," he had answered, "It has been popular," and that was all. Then I had said, "Do you play cricket?" He said, "A bit," and was silent. But now he and Tai were talking softly in Hindi. It was a natural thing for them to do; I did not feel shut out. Tai's voice did most of the murmuring. Dr. Joshi seemed from time to time to ask questions. Several times Tai said, "Akka, it is time for us to go" but she did not rise.

Dr. Joshi said, "Please, don't go. It is so pleasant to sit with you. Mrs. Armstrong, if you were here longer I would do something special for your entertainment. You are so kind to let Tai and me visit."

It was three o'clock when Tai did rise and say we must go.

Dr. Joshi said ruefully, "I, too, have appointments."

He had the servant call a taxi for himself but sent Tai and me back to the hotel in the shining car.

Tai and I rested a little, but we had to get our baggage ready promptly. We were to leave Bombay at

nine that evening. Ushe and the children would be coming soon to have dinner with us. The brother-in-law would come directly from his office. Tai and I did not talk; I was curious about her conversation with Dr. Joshi, but this was the kind of thing Tai did not repeat. She talked about family and friends with me but never on the "He-said-she-said" basis. My eyes drooped in the heat, but the heat people complain about in India felt good as the fans whirled it about.

I opened my eyes with a start. Tai, Ushe and the children were having tea, sitting around the table in the bay window. When I woke suddenly like that, I had a sinking feeling as if I were falling into an abyss of loneliness. Tai sensed these moods of mine and at once came and took my hand.

"Why didn't you waken me when Ushe came?" I said.

"You needed the rest, Akka. Come now, wash your face with some cool water and have some tea."

Ushe and I smiled gently at one another as we sat across the table. I commented on her beautiful sari, a dark purple with some golden threads. Tai had told me to make over Ushe—she was so shy—and to praise her saris. Ushe was shorter, rounder, softer, and browner than Tai. She had lovely golden beads in her black bead marriage chain around her neck and two golden bangles on each wrist. Tai and her sister talked earnestly. The boy pressed for my attention again about American stamps. My tea drunk, I went over and sat on the couch, pulling the girl with me. She was shy like her mother. The boy pulled a chair close and peppered me with questions about the United States. Mohan was thin, sharp, and eager; hair and eyes shiny; khaki shorts and white shirt crisply clean. Asha did not look up; her hair was in two shiny braids tied with bright pink ribbons that matched her pink frock. It too was starched but her dress seemed too short in the waist, too long in the skirt. It added awkwardness to her shyness. She had one hand in her lap, a golden bangle on the wrist. "What a lovely, heavy bangle," I said. Tai had schooled me in so many

things. I knew that I must mention the weight of gold.

Asha looked up at me shyly, "I am to have another when I am twelve."

The brother-in-law came blustering in, and as usual he was sweating. He flung himself on a couch and at once asked about our baggage. Tai said, "Mrs. Armstrong secured her bag."

I thought, "There is a hint of pride in her voice."

She opened the drawer, took out her money pouch, pulled out the handful of papers for her baggage. She threw them in his lap. His knees, as usual, were wide apart and the papers scattered on the floor, Mohan scrambling after them. "There they are," Tai said disdainfully. "You will have to do whatever you can for me."

He began to say, "It will take a long time," but Tai cut in, "We must go to dinner at once." He didn't properly fold the papers—just thrust them into his pocket. Tai swept at the head of the procession as we went to dinner.

The meal was a long session; the brother-in-law ate heartily and steadily with a good many Indian gulps and burps common in India; Tai and the sister ate little. It was obvious that the sister had not had much practice using knife and fork. The children dropped their silver but the boy ate like his father, a heavy meal, the girl like her mother ate little. Tai was urging me to eat, telling me that I wouldn't have English food like this for some time. It was early for dinner, but still there were Europeans and Americans and some Indians, the women in glittering saris. Our table was quiet with awe of the grand surroundings except for the sounds of eating.

Back in our room, we found the Pardhis waiting. Shielia, pale in her sari, as usual clung to Tai; already she had tears in her eyes over our departure. A servant brought a message from Dr. Joshi. He had an emergency operation but his car would be at the door to take us to the station. Tai would not let us sit down, she

said we must go at once and rang for the servant who summoned the porters. Tai unlocked the wardrobe. Soon I saw our holdalls hoisted up on red turbans for the first time. They looked like such big fat rolls on top of the tall skinny men. There were six porters. Between Tai and me we had many pieces of luggage: two holdalls, two paper suit boxes, tightly wrapped, two El Capitan blue bags, two more from SAS and our string bag bulging full and our suitcases. What didn't go on the porters' heads they held out stiffly in their arms. Tai organized, I stood back and admired her skill. In no time, the porters were off and we leaving our room, Tai giving a last extra tip to the two bearers who were smiling and salaaming to us. We had settled with the Taj that afternoon when we came in. Tai had managed to have Dr. Joshi's car come to the side entrance. There were so many of us, so much luggage, such utter confusion it seemed. But in a few minutes we were riding away in the cars, the luggage stored in the trunks, the brother-in-law, Usha and the children in Dr. Joshi's car. Their faces glowed as they stepped in. Mr. Pardhi sat in the front seat of his car with the driver, I was ushered in first to the back seat, then Tai, then Shiela, then the sister. I squeezed as tight as I could to the side and Tai pushed tight against me, but when Shiela and the sister were in, there was room.

We were to leave from Central Station on the *Calcutta Mail*. Tai had prepared me for Indian railroad stations, crowds, confusion. But this was more. The station was an enormous building. A long row of porters lolling on the curb jumped up and stormed our cars as we drove up. They had faded red turbans and long red shirts hanging loose over scraps of ragged shorts. All were tall and thin. Tai was out of the car, pushed back the crowd without touching them and with only a few words. Within seconds she had hired six porters, designated one of them as top man, and our luggage was on their heads. I suppose there were ticket windows and the usual facilities of big stations but all I could

see was a milling crowd as we pushed along in a loose group behind our six porters. Outside there were long rows of platforms, with access by steps and overhead runways. Each track seemed to have a puffing train on it. It was all crowds and utter confusion but the *Calcutta Mail* was on the track right beside us. The brother-in-law had bought our tickets ahead according to Tai's order: Ladies, first class in a European-style compartment. We stood while the brother-in-law and the porters hunted our reservation. There were Indian men in fur caps, in turbans, in Gandhi-caps, bare-headed. There were pajamas—white and striped—dhotis, western clothes. There were saris of every color. There were vendors selling food from carts and from trays, selling toys, knick knacks of every description. No beggars approached us. We were a little island in that sifting, waving mass of colors. There was odor too—the heat of India, a smell in itself. The acrid smoke of the train blew across us. I could smell coconut hair oil on the men and sandalwood perfume on the women, and there was the smell of sweat in spite of all the Hindu bathing. Steamy Bombay demanded this tribute of sweat. There were smells of food, rancid grease; but some of the smells were good, hot and spicy. The *Calcutta Mail* was a long train. Some coaches were air conditioned. We could tell these by the green-tinted glass in the closed windows. Then there were first, second and third class coaches. The wooden third class coaches with open windows, long wooden benches were just back of the engine, packed full, but still Indians with bulky packages were pushing up the steps; and the man the traveler always tells about was being pushed through one of the windows.

The brother-in-law came back huffing happily this time. Tai had told me how Indians enjoy the excitement of crowds and coming and going. The brother-in-law pushed ahead of us to our compartment. Mr. Pardhu followed, a little disconsolately. It was his duty to his son-in-law to do for us but there was a great deal of

competition. Shiela and her sister were like willows in the wind in the pushing crowd. Mohan was everywhere, Asha clinging to Ushe's sari.

Outside the compartment, we stopped to make our good-byes. From somewhere garlands were brought out. Shiela, weeping, put one around my neck and one around Tai's neck and Ushe too put garlands around our necks. Again we were sweet and heavy with flowers. There were many namastes and good-byes. The train would not go for some time but Tai and the others said we must get in the compartment at once. "People might try to push in." The outside of the coach was dark and dirty-looking. One low step up disclosed the inside too was dark and dirty-looking. There was a door on either side. There were two wide green leather bunk beds with wide green leather backs. On either end there was a dressing table, a mirror with numerous little shelves around and under it. Over each of these a big fan was already whining loudly. Each berth had an outside window and a feeble electric globe. There was a door leading, I knew by the strong smell of disinfectant, into a toilet.

A bulky dark woman in a yellow sari sat squatted like a huge yellow cloud on one of the berths, so I sat down on the other. Tai tried the bolt-type locks on the other door. The woman said, "They are locked. I have tested them." Tai said to the woman, "Will you keep a watch while I go out for last words."

Only my toes touched the floor and the seat was too wide for me to lean against the back. Our baggage was all about us, but the porters had neatly dispersed it. Baggage was all about the other berth too; even a small trunk pushed up close. I thought if I had a trunk, I could use it for a footstool, but the woman had her feet drawn up under her and was sitting at ease on the wide seat. My eyes went on up from the yellow silk sari. There were four heavy gold bangles on each round arm, a heavy gold chain around her neck, big yellow diamonds in her ears, and a diamond in her nose. I looked

into her eyes. She was looking me over too in my gray silk suit, hat and white gloves. I left the heavy garlands about my neck but I took off my gloves. I wanted to raise my status by showing that I had one jewel, a diamond ring; I couldn't identify this woman as Tai could—her state, caste, married or single, religion, financial condition—but I could tell that her position was substantial. She smiled at me, a wide warm smile, and I smiled back.

Before we could speak, a young Indian woman in what I judged to be a cheap sari pushed into the compartment, Tai after her. The young woman began talking to the woman in the yellow sari. Tai at once entered the discussion. The young woman intended to occupy the fourth bunk. Tai said "But your name is not posted on the compartment." The young woman made no pretense that she had bought the reservation at the last minute.

She said, "I do not have tickets for this class but I have a friend in the station." The young woman wanted to bring her mother in to sleep in the fourth berth; she herself would sleep on the floor.

Tai stood on her rights and refused any floor sleeping. She said heatedly, "This American woman will go to the toilet in the night. She will trip over you and fall." The bulky woman in the yellow sari entered into the spirited conversation, but she didn't commit herself. The young woman sat down on the trunk and leaned back against the bunk. Tai said scornfully, "She probably has no ticket at all."

The yellow-sari woman said, "If she is in here with us, she can open the doors at a station and let someone in to rob us."

The girl didn't defend herself; just sat motionless, her eyes closed. The brother-in-law was now sticking his head in the door, urging that the girl be thrown out. Tai swiftly shut out his bossing. She said, "Akka, come. We will say good-bye and bolt the lower half of the door before anything else happens."

Tai and I leaned far out, our garlands swinging from our necks. The little group was gathered close. The brother-in-law was in front. Just back of him was Ushe; her purple sari and the pink of the daughter's frock made a bouquet. Just to the side was Mr. Pardhi. There was a sad, quiet dignity about him. Between him and Ushe, Shiela was entwined with her sister. Except for the difference of the pale pink and pale blue of their saris, you could have thought them one slender person. Mohan was circling the group, now pushing through them to the front, yelling, "Don't forget to save stamps for me!" All of us were making namastes and saying good-bye. Tai brought our farewell to an abrupt conclusion.

"Step back, Akka," she said, and she shut the heavy upper door. She pushed the bolts down and gave it a good shake to be certain it was secure. "Now, Akka, we will make our beds."

I stood quite helpless, but Tai took hold of the green leather back, gave it a quick jerk. It opened easily. There were chains to secure it and there we were with two wide bunk beds, one above the other, beds long enough for the long legs of the British who built these trains. Tai said, "Help me hoist up my holdall, Akka. I'll make mine up first so I'll not have to tramp your bed."

Between us we got the holdall up. Tai unfastened the buckles, spread it flat, pulled the head and foot out of the canvas pockets that held them firm and clean, loosened the bedding from the sides. All this she did as she stood on the lower bunk. Then she climbed up, pulling herself by the chains. There was not head room for her to sit upright. She crouched, looking over at me laughing. I said, "Oh, Tai, you are climbing

about like a monkey." Quickly she turned away and climbed down: monkeys were a tabu subject with Tai, and she was out of temper with me for a few minutes. We began to spread my holdall. The woman in the yellow sari was spreading hers. The young woman sat forward on the trunk but did not get up. The woman worked around her. She pulled the green leather back and made the second bunk just as Tai had done. I thought she should not have opened the bunk then the girl would have had to sit on the trunk; and I thought the girl stayed stoutly in the compartment but gave up easily about her mother.

The woman in the yellow sari heaved herself up on the lower bunk in the midst of her bedding and began to visit with us. She talked about the danger of robbery on trains—how dacoits would hide on top of the trains and at way stations break into women's compartments to steal their jewelry. Tai shifted the conversation; she knew how timid I was. She and Tai exchanged a great deal of information in short order. Tai's facts I was to hear over and over—about her four year stay in colleges in the United States, about her living with me and my return with her to visit India. The woman in the yellow sari spoke excellent English. She told us first that she and husband had lived nine years in England. Then she said proudly that he was the manager of the Scindia Steam Ship Company. I listened to her tell how comfortable their flat in England was and how she liked English food and ways. She just loved Brussels sprouts. And now they were comfortably settled in a house in Calcutta. They had two daughters. Both had been well married but the younger one was widowed. Her husband had died suddenly and left her with a baby boy. The husband had already inherited so there was no question of money for the child's education. Two years had already passed. "Our daughter drags around the house, listless, still in white saris. She is so young. Her life shouldn't be lived out this way." Her voice raised in question but Tai did not reply, so she went on. "Calcutta is very progressive. We could have offers."

(The parents of boys, sometimes of girls, are approached with offers of marriage.) The woman, her thoughts on the problem of the daughter, talked on. She said, "Now widows remarry."

After a bit Tai said, "Mrs. Armstrong is very tired. We must lie down."

We had made plans that I would sleep in my "Ship 'n Shore" jersey. I went in to the bathroom to change. It was a smelly little square but it had been scrubbed clean. The smell was the odor of Lysol, familiar to me for American hospitals and doctors had reeked of it in earlier years. There was a small shower, leaking quite badly and with no curtain. It sprayed everywhere. The water ran into a drain in the floor. The stool looked clean, but I sat on a newspaper with a hole torn in it. On Tai's advice I had brought toilet paper from the hotel. "Till we can buy," she said. The basin was shiny metal. The fixtures were substantial British.

Tai had on a white sari when I came back into the compartment. Tai and the yellow sari woman in turn went into the bathroom. Tai was just back when the train began to whistle. Quickly Tai opened the upper half of the door. We leaned out. The train was moving. The group was there just as we had left them. Again we called good-byes. Tai quickly shut and bolted the upper half of the door. All of us climbed in our bunks. The yellow-sari woman called to make certain we had the heavy inside wooden shutters over our windows fastened tightly. "It's much safer that way," she said. Tai assured her that our shutters were tight. Then she poked her head over the edge of her bunk. Her sweet face looked down at me. "Good night, Akka. Try to go right to sleep. Your poor back. Now it will learn the hard beds of India." I said, "Good night, Tai." Across in the other bunk the woman was lying back on her pillow, her bulk rounded high. She was sleeping in her yellow silk sari. The young woman was sitting on the trunk, her head back on the bunk. She looked asleep. Her light had not been turned off but I turned the button to dim our bulb.

I listened to the rhythm of the train. It was a noisy chunk-a-chunk with a constant jingle from the loose ends of the bunk chains overhead. The bed was too hard for my lame hips so I lay flat on my back. The train was not running very fast. It stopped suddenly with a good bump. I sat up.

"Tail Tail"

I knew Tai would have her prayer over and be asleep even in these few minutes. But more suddenly than I cried out, the young woman had the bolts pushed back and the door open. An enormous woman and a boy of six pushed in. Tai was down storming and the woman in the yellow sari was sitting up joining in. Swiftly the daughter pushed the door shut, bolted it and the train was moving.

Tai climbed back up to her bunk, telling the young woman in a firm voice, "There is to be no sleeping on the floor." The mother squatted on the trunk. She covered it and overflowed. The young woman and the boy squatted on the floor. They had two baskets, a tiffin box and a water jug, a lota. I had raised up on my elbow to watch them. They began to eat. The strong smell of spice and Indian food filled the compartment. With our shutters so tightly closed the fans were pushing the smell about in the close warm air. Tai was shouting down at them, using one of her favorite words, "Stinky." The boy was climbing up and down. The young woman got up and half-leaned, half-sat on the berth.

The woman in the yellow sari called out loudly. "I'm being pushed to the wall."

At last the sounds of eating were done. The mother heaved her bulk up, stood on the trunk, then on the berth; then with the daughter pushing and shoving she got into the top bunk. The little boy was all about like a spider monkey. The woman in the yellow sari was calling out for them to get off her bed and Tai was shouting down that they couldn't sleep on the floor. The young woman sat down on the trunk but this time she leaned back so that she was half lying on the bottom bunk. The little boy kept climbing up and down but

at last he must have gone to sleep in some bit of a corner with the grandmother. Everything was quiet except for the fast chunk-chunk of the train, the persistent rattle of the chains and the re-echoing snores of the grandmother.

It seemed as if I had hardly been asleep when the compartment was again in an uproar. The light was on, the little boy was climbing, the young woman was all over the bunks. The woman in the yellow sari was yelling, Tai was shouting. I pecked through one of the slats in the shutter. It was black dark outside. Tai was calling me to know the time. I put on our light, got my money bag out from under my pillow. It was almost two o'clock. The mother oozed from the upper bunk. The train was slowing, stopped. The young woman had the door open. Tai and the woman in the yellow sari were out of their beds. The young woman and the boy were off and as the huge bulk of the mother squeezed out the door, Tai shut the doors with a bang. She shot one bolt while the woman in the yellow sari shot the other. Both of them shook the door to be certain it was secure. They didn't check or wait to see that all the lunch baskets and baggage were off. Both of them muttering got back in their beds. The train was off. The shaking of the train, the roar of the fans seemed peaceful now; we slept.

Tai was shaking me saying, "Get up and dress, Akka." I roused, then started up in fright. It was dark in my berth in the compartment. I listened for sounds of dacoits but there were no sounds overhead. The train was chunk-chunking along; the chain ends were rattling; the fans were whirring. I could make out the dim hump of the woman in the yellow sari in the other berth. Tai reached in, pulled back my green spread, and said in her school teacher commanding voice, "Come Akka. Smooth up your hair and put on your silk suit."

I was at a loss. "Tai, why do we need to dress now? We aren't to reach Nagpur until eight."

"Don't you remember, Akka? I sent a note to my

friends the Mahajan's in Amravti. If it reaches them in time they will drive over to the way station to welcome me home. Don't you remember? The Mahajan's were my closest friends all the seventeen years I taught in Amravti; I arranged their marriage; Akka, we are almost there."

I struggled into my suit, pinned my hair.

"Akka, put on your hat."

I hadn't even washed my face, but I made an outward appearance as presentable as I could in the brief moments before the train ground to a stop. Tai pushed the bolts back and had the door open. Just where the train stopped stood the couple, their eyes, their faces alight with welcome. Tai was off and she and the woman held one another by the hands—the man was making namastes. Tai was presenting them to me and telling me to stand in the doorway, not step down; the train would only halt for a minute. Words tumbled out between them. The woman was taller than the man, but he was a big solid fellow. The woman was angular but she had poise. A gong rang loudly; Tai hopped up beside me with her gay, quick movement. Mrs. Mahajan quickly handed up a little hamper and Mr. Mahajan a larger open basket full of oranges.

"Eat oranges for breakfast before you reach Nagpur," he called.

She was saying, "Come to us in Amravti," as the train pulled away.

Tai was hanging on to me and I was clinging to the door frame; the train was gaining speed. Tai pushed me back and shut the lower half with a bang and bolted it, then leaned out and waved to her friends. Once they were out of sight, we stood looking out at India, a brown half-circle before our eyes, dry and dusty, no vegetation, few trees. There were small fields from which the crops had been cut. It was a barren stretch of land at this season. We passed a village, wall and huts of yellow-brown mud. The sun was just over the skyline, large and red, opening out into orange. "Lie down

and rest again, Akka," Tai urged, Her eyes were bright with excitement.

"No, Tai this is your morning. You are returning to Nagpur after your travels. Let's stay awake and enjoy every minute of it."

We spoke quietly; the woman in the yellow sari seemed still asleep. Tai folded my bedding into the holdall, smoothing and arranging it so that it would be ready made for a bed when opened. I went in the bathroom and took off my suit, properly washing myself for the day. I came out with my blouse and skirt on; it seemed too intimate even in a woman's compartment to comb my hair before the mirror in just a slip. Tai had her holdall strapped; I helped her get it down and mine beside it on the floor. She undid the chains for the upper berth. Both of us pushed and it was the back rest again. We sat down; both of us were alight with pleasure. Tai spread a newspaper between us and peeled an orange for me. It had a soft skin like a tangerine "Taste it, Akka. You have never known oranges before." It was fragrant with odor and of the sweetest orange flavor. I leaned over the paper in order not to get juice on my suit. My clumsy fingers had broken the segments. Tai was holding her orange, not a drop spilling as she ate the sections. After the orange, Tai opened the little hamper. It was crammed with Indian sweets. "Eat, Akka," Tai urged. "Breakfast on the train is not served until Nagpur." Tai did not eat much, but I feasted. I didn't have tea but I took a cup of water from the lota Ushe had provided. It worried me that we had carried away two good brass containers from Bombay. Tai said that the family changed them back and forth in traveling.

We had put up our shutters. The country stretched out wide before my eyes, flat and arid. People in the mud hut villages were up. The village well was not enclosed by the wall, and frequently a pond adjoined the well. Women were drawing water in pots, the brass twinkling in the sun already moving up in the sky.

Women were bathing in the pond, saris close around them, and I could see clothes being thumped on stones at the edge of the water. Red and yellow saris, the colors soft but gay. This was the India of the pictures and the books. Tai was all action: cleaning up our meal, arranging our luggage. She had no interest in looking out train windows and she marveled at my steady gaze.

Nagpur

THERE BEGAN TO BE THE CLUTTER OF BUILDINGS that is the outskirts of every city. Houses were closer together; there were courtyard walls, trees, shrubs, streets. Tai said, "We can see the roof of my sister's house. Look, Akka; see the boy waving? That is one of my elder sister's grandsons."

The train was still moving quite rapidly. Nagpur was spread out; the houses were bungalows, the business area we were running through now seemed to me low sheds much in need of repair. The train slowed. We were running by a wooden station platform with a large station house behind it. The train stopped with a jolt. Tai opened the lower half of the door. I grabbed her to keep her from falling headlong. She jerked herself away from me saying, "Don't be so timid, Akka," and jumped from the still-moving train out onto the platform. She ran to a large group of people and when the train stopped, I followed her.

We were surrounded by women in saris, men in Western clothes, white shirts and trousers, light wool or

silk coats and children of all ages. There was a buzz of talking. There was no embracing or kissing but many namastes and a genuine warmth of welcome. Garlands were being thrown over our heads. We were being handed nosegays. I was presented first to Mr. Gokhale. This I knew was the man Tai called her brother-cousin. Then the others were presented to me: Mrs. Gokhale, Mukund, Tai's son (again); Mandakini, his slender dark wife with tears, tears of joy running down her face. Anil and Pramila, their son and daughter, their dark eyes darkened with kohl made namastes too, looking at me a little afraid. They did not seem to remember me from Bombay. Sujata, the baby girl in Mandakini's arms, took one look, turned her face into her mother's shoulder and howled; my white hair and white face were too much for her. And at that moment I became aware that I was white, a white woman. Here I stood alone among fifty or more brown people. Tai's welcome was enthusiastic, and mine was warm—I did not feel strange or outcast or unequal and I didn't feel superior, but I was different. My position was like that of the white race, a small minority when counted against the brown people of the world.

We stood heavy with flower garlands to our knees and we had five nosegays. I met Tai's brother, his wife, their eleven year-old son and their daughters, college girls; one brother-in-law, Dr Sathe, was there, and Tai's elder sister's son, also a doctor. They had their wives and children with them. And then there were many friends—men and women. Coming home, which meant so much to Tai, had come to a grand climax in this welcome. People stood and visited as if at a reception. We were posed for pictures. Tai, without seeming to, arranged us: I between Mr. and Mrs. Gokhale; Tai behind us, with her brother, then Mukund, Mandakini and their children; the brother-in-law and friends crowded together back of them.

The *Calcutta Mail* pulled out without our noticing it. There was no shrieking and calling to the children to "Stand back! The train is moving" We were not a

quiet group but talk and movement flowed smoothly. Our departure was that same easy way. I was aware that the station platform was full of other people; saris were gay; the station building was large and there were many wooden palings and wire and steel post barriers between the platform and the station. We passed through turnstiles, then out through a large waiting room crowded with people standing about; there was no hurry; no pushing. Outside we got into a Buick car, Tai beside me, Mr. Gokhale in front with a driver. Our baggage was stored in the trunk and about us by porters. The relatives and friends melted away, each to his own transportation. Mr. Gokhale said to the driver, "The Mount Hotel."

The streets were flowing full of cars; there were no trucks, but there were fleets of men on bicycles going to their offices; there were many bullock carts and bicycle rickshaws, a few tongas and some wandering cows. The bungalows were behind walls. The little groups of business buildings seemed makeshift, but open bazaar shops were putting in glass-front windows and doors. We passed a small, discreet British sign: "Bank of India." The building stood far back from the road, among shrubs, built like a mansion but it too was not well kept. This was Nagpur, with half a million people, the most important city in central India, the capital of one of the most advanced states in India, capital of United Provinces.

Tai must have read my thoughts for she put her hand in mine and said, "Akka, now you will see Indian ways."

I said, "Tai, you have trained me to understand as well as see." And while my eyes saw a city dusty, disheveled, my mind saw the group at the station, educated, competent. I saw groups like these waking India from the customs of centuries past to the modern world.

The Mount Hotel was some distance out. Tai questioned and Mr. Gokhale said, "Now, it is by far the best in Nagpur. They have a good management; we have our Rotary meetings there." Tai was busy talking

about Rotary meetings she had addressed in the United States and about the meeting she had addressed in Bangkok. Mr. Gokhale informed her that the Nagpur Rotary was meeting Tuesday evening; they would expect her to address them.

The car turned into a drive with some ill kept shrubs and straggly cannas; far back was a structure, two stories of dirty white stucco. The car stopped under a porte-cochere beside a verandah edged with pots filled with tall plants; a shedlike structure was at the far side. "The new reception hall where we have the Rotary dinners," Mr. Gokhale explained. The driver came around and opened the door and helped Mr. Gokhale out. He stood pompous, his brown face shining a little; early as it was in the day it was hot enough to sweat.

A servant came out, his trousers and tunic baggy and dirty but with a wide red belt and a red cockade in his cap. We were led through a little lobby with a few chairs, a couch, and some magazines on a coffee table. The manager, a tall young man, clean in white shirt and trousers, welcomed us. We followed Mr. Gokhale and him up a wide stair and down the length of the upper balcony to a room with two dismal beds and a couple of chairs.

Mr. Gokhale spoke loudly. "This will never do. I ordered a suite for them."

The manager began, "But we are expecting. . . ." Mr. Gokhale did not wait for more words but stormed downstairs, we after him. The manager followed and took us directly to the end room on the lower porch—the choicest suite because it had windows to the side as well as front. This time we entered a little sitting room; behind it was a bedroom, and behind it a bath. There were some newspapers about and a pair of trousers on a chair. One of the beds was tumbled. The manager said apologetically, "The room is not quite ready for occupancy. Perhaps you will have breakfast while we arrange it."

We put our flowers on the table and walked back on the verandah. Mr. Gokhale and Tai stood for a few

moments arranging dates. He would send the car for us the next day to bring us for lunch and he would arrange a *hurda party* and a ride about the city. He was smiling, well pleased with himself and with us. As he left, Tai said, "We will be ready, Baba Sahib." His smile deepened on his round brown face; his round body puffed with pride. He made namaste to both of us. Tai took my arm and we strolled into the lobby.

"You have always said Mr. Gokhale to me, Tai."

She laughed. "That is the first time I have ever called him 'Baba Sahib.' He always wanted to hear me pay him that honor. I chose to do it on this occasion."

The young manager was waiting to show us into the dining room. There were two openings with curtains like our bedspreads but dingy and worn. He held one back for us and ushered us in. It was a high rectangular room without windows except at the back. Here the windows had lengthwise bars, no screens. Part of the way back there was worn matting on the floors; the rest of the floor was bare. There were two rows of small tables. The cloths looked gray in the half light. The narrow part of the room at the back that had the windows was divided off from the main dining area by an open lattice. A couple of big old buffets were against the walls. The manager led us to the very back table and seated us. There were no menus, no napkins, and no one else was there. Each table had a number on a card and there were red and yellow spots that Indian food makes on the cloth. There was no bearer in sight. Tai began to drum on the table with her hand. I do not know whether it was exasperation or a signal, but a bearer appeared at once. He wore an ornate sash, he had an over-shoulder cross-piece of red as well as a belt. The cockade in his cap was twice as large as the servant's at the entrance, but his tunic and trousers were just as dirty. Tai talked to him, then began to speak to me with a British accent. "Akka, eggs are the only food they have to offer you. It is a shame—your first meal in Nagpur. They serve few English meals here. You won't be able to eat their Indian food."

As we sat waiting, some sparrows flew through the open windows and perched on the lattice. The boldest one landed on the edge of our table. Tai said, "Shoo" and clapped her hands and laughed. "Well, Akka, at any rate you can watch the birds while you eat as you do at home."

It was a long time before our food came. The bearer who brought it was a lesser servant, not as tall, thinner and with just a narrow red belt. But his white clothes were the dirtiest of all. Tai had rice, chapattis, dahl and a curry. She gave me a chapatti, not letting me eat the bun served with my meal. She ordered fans turned on. This made the sparrows twitter and they didn't land on the table again.

When we went out, the manager was standing behind the counter in his little office at one side of the lobby. Tai sailed over to him, her sari standing out stiff with indignation. Her voice was very, very British. She spared no words. "The dining room is filthy. See that it is swept. Put on a clean cloth for us at one of the top tables, and have English food prepared for Mrs. Armstrong. It is a disgrace to have only this to offer a guest from the United States. I will inform you when we will be away from meals. Where is the telephone?"

The young man dropped his head like a school boy and said, "Yes, Mrs. Sathe."

The phone was in the corridor by the stairs; Tai put me down with a magazine while she made some calls.

We strolled back down the porch. It was a bright day; Tai was in high good humor again. Our rooms looked tidy but the nets over the beds were the same gray as the table cloths. Tai shook one, dust flew. Back into the bathroom she stormed. There was a stool and washbasin; a dirty blackened brass bucket full of water stood beside the stone slab for bathing. With a quick motion she tipped the bucket, the water splashed all over the tile floor. Back she walked into the little living room, grabbed the white doilies from the table and from the desk by the window, threw them on the floor, put her finger on the call bell and held it there. The

bearer did not come for a few minutes, but he came running. Tai had not moved her finger from the bell until he was in the room. I was to learn that Tai's temper in India blew hot and cold.

Tai was stern but businesslike. "The linen is dirty." She poked with her sandal at one of the doilies. On she went into the bedroom. "We must have clean nets." She jerked the spread and sheet back on the bed. It was rumpled "Look at that; some one else's dirt, and you offer it to a guest from the United States! We must have everything clean. She went to the door of the bathroom. "Get the sweeper. The bathroom must be scrubbed and the hot water bucket scoured with ashes. The sofa and chair must be lifted into the yard and beat clean and the floors swept. Come, Akka, we will sit on the porch while they make the arrangements."

There were comfortable lounge chairs with woven cane seat and back. Both of us relaxed. Tai put her head back, shut her eyes. I could tell by her even breathing that she was asleep. There was an outside entrance into the bathroom opening from a small back porch which I could not see from the front verandah but I could faintly hear the servants moving in our rooms.

The sun was beating down on the hard-packed driveway and on the tufty grass outside the row of plants on the porch. Time stood still in the heat. At last the servant came out and made namaste to us. The motion of his coming awakened Tai. She said, "Come, Akka, you must lie down. I am going to Mukund's for a while. He will return with me for dinner and take us to the big Ganesha procession and immersion this evening. It is the end of the celebration. You must rest this afternoon for we will be late tonight."

The bearer stood waiting.

There was nothing casual about the way Tai walked back into the room. She passed the clean doilies without seeming to notice. In the bedroom, there were clean nets on both beds. She pulled back the bedding. It was fresh, clean. She turned the buttons for the fans: wide wooden blades set in the ceiling. Both of them whirled

into motion. She said nothing but moved over to the window, wiped her fingers over the sill, held them up with dirt on them. "See that the rooms are properly swept and dusted tomorrow." The servant was tucking the sheets back and smoothing the clean spreads. The floor in the bathroom was still wet. The brass bucket was cleaner but not shining. "The tiles must be scrubbed each day." She kicked the brass bucket with the toe of her sandal, making the hot water slop a little. "Take the bucket back. We will not use it until the brass is shining."

The sweeper came in the door. He had been standing out of sight on the little back porch. His head and back were bent low as he came in so he did not have to stoop to pick up the bucket. He went out still bent low. Tai turned a faucet. "There is water. It is cold, but you can use the bathroom, Akka." The bearer slipped away. I took off my dress and lay down. I was asleep before Tai had her sari changed and was away.

I wakened late in the afternoon, alone in India for the first time. Even the fan had not kept me from being sticky with the heat. I washed, grateful that the water was cold. I put on one of my Indian print cotton dresses. Tai was not at hand to crowd me into silk. I walked out on the little back porch and a ragged little boy and girl came running up from someplace in back and stood staring at me. I obeyed Tai's instructions to notice no one, went in, closed the door and walked through our rooms out onto the front porch. A gardner with a ragged bit of shirt and shorts was dribbling water on the row of potted plants. I sat down in one of the cane chairs. It was pleasant just to sit. I knew Tai would stay with her children to the last minute, so I did not fret as the shadows lengthened. At last a bicycle rickshaw drove in, the thin legs of the Indian pedaling hard and fast. Tai and Mukund came in. She was solicitous. Had I been lonely? Had I rested? I assured her that I had managed. "We didn't realize it was so late," she said. "I have so much to tell."

We went at once into the dining room, the manager

holding the curtain aside with a smile. He pulled out three chairs at table number one. The cloth was cheap cotton, not starched but clean. There were napkins, new ones that had never been washed. The floor had been swept, but the other table cloths still had spots. At one table there were two men who looked European; at another table there was a blond, fairly young man—he had to be English. And at three more tables there were Indians, each eating alone. The head bearer came, grand in his belt and cap. He had a clean tunic but his trousers were still dirty. He and Tai consulted. She beamed at me. "They have cooked for you, Akka."

When our table bearer came with the food, he was just as dirty as ever. Tai ate her Indian dinner with relish and so did Mukund. They used knives and forks. So did the other Indian men, but quite awkwardly. There were several new spots on their tablecloths, but not on ours. I had boiled potatoes, cauliflower, both watery gray, and a few scraps of lamb—hard and dry. Tai promptly said, "Our lamb curry is delicious. It is not too hot. A little won't hurt you, Akka."

I was thankful to have some flavor and moisture with my food but I said, "It was kind of them to prepare special food for me."

Tai replied sharply, "Don't be so American. It is their duty to prepare proper food for their guests. I am going to tell the manager that your food was not well-cooked."

There was only one rickshaw standing by the hotel, the one Tai and Mukund had returned in. Tai said three of us could not ride. Mukund insisted, "We must stay close together for we soon will be in crowds. It will be safer that way."

It was twilight and cooler as we started. We went by streets of walled bungalows and by deserted looking warehouses. There were a few other rickshaws but no cars, and there were people moving along the road in the varicolored pattern of saris, with the white shadows of men walking beside them and children running along, calling and shouting. When we came to shops

and bazaars, the crowd was thick, all moving in the same direction; it was getting quite dark.

Tai began explaining: "This is the festival for Ganesh, the elephant-headed god. You remember Parvati, one of the wives of Shiva, bore him a son, Ganesh. One day in a rage, Shiva cut off Ganesh's head. To conciliate Parvati he sent men into the forest to bring back the head of the first living thing they found. They returned with an elephant head; Shiva put it on Ganesh. Ganesh has four hands. He became one of the popular Indian gods. This is a week-long festival. Each neighborhood sets up images of Ganesh, the same as we saw in Bombay. The images are made in clay and some of them are huge and artistically decorated. The cost of making them runs into hundreds of rupees but all the work is done voluntarily. Tonight all the images will be taken out in procession. The small and medium ones will be taken out in the beginning; the big ones come late in the night. Each image as it finishes the procession will be placed on the water side, worshipped, and then submerged. They are heavy and go straight to the bottom. We will be passing the tank where they submerge them. It is one of the city's largest reservoirs. Look through the crowd, Akka. You can see the water." We were cycling slowly along, Mukund walking beside us.

Mukund walked now up by the front of the cycle, pushing a way through the dense crowd. Only the fact that all the people were going in the same direction made it possible to move. There were some street lights but they were dim. The crowd was noisy, in a festive way. There was a gentle, steady pushing, a mass intent on a common purpose. Individuals did not stand out, no one person seemed to shove more or talk louder than the group.

We came to an intersection; traffic was going both ways in full stream. On a platform high in the center, a policeman in khaki uniform stood. He was making no effort at stop and go. We, like the rest from our street swam cross stream, against the current this time. Once across, Mukund led the rickshaw to the left side of the

street, close to a two-story building, with shops below closed and shuttered and an overhanging balcony. Somehow Mukund and Tai got my clumsy legs out of the rickshaw. People were telling the drivers to move on and we were almost carried out into the moving throng, but Mukund and Tai with me between them pushed into the doorway. We went up the rickety narrow stair. A door was open into a room above, the living quarters of one of Mukund's friends. There was a bright bare electric bulb in the room, and I had just a glimpse of a few pieces of Western furniture. There were hasty introductions and we were led at once out on the balcony. The procession would begin at any minute; it was eight o'clock. Already the wooden balcony was crowded full. Mukund stood with a straight chair for me.

I protested. "I can sit on the floor."

Tai agreed. "Yes, give me a cushion for her."

Mandakini and the children were there, and a dozen others. Somehow they wedged us in. The railing was low and open; it did not obstruct our view, but it was old and broken. Above our heads was some wood lace, more Victorian than Indian. It too was broken and ready to fall. There was a hole in the floor under me. Across the street there were matching balconies held up by wooden brackets. No one but me was concerned about possible danger from so much weight on such an old structure. The children still managed to push about. The young couple on whose balcony we were guests had two, there were Mukund's three and several more. All were small and I was thankful they didn't have more weight to throw against the rail. No one told the children to sit down or be careful; there was just pleasant chatter.

The procession started before we really realized it. There were a few bicycle rickshaws with their tops down. On the seats they had small figures of Ganesh with garlands. Music began, a small group of drummers and bagpipes. Cars and a few small trucks began to roll slowly by, decorated like floats—each one displaying Ganesh at its center. I pointed out to Tai one

that must have been three feet tall. She said, "The big ones will be late in the night. Some will be five and six feet!" On the street, the spectators had packed themselves back against the buildings, tight as could be but bulging out from the curbs. The center of the street was full of men walking beside every float. "The neighbors that have decorated the float," Tai explained. "If it breaks down they can repair it or push it." And sometimes a car was being pushed or there would be a break in the procession and Tai would say, "Some float has had a break-down."

As the Ganeshes got to be larger, the bands of musicians increased. A few were playing flutes but mostly the air was raucous with bagpipes and the thump of the drums. The first lights appeared in the procession. Men walked in groups of two and three, wearing white shirts and dhotis, carrying kerosene torches; and then at regular intervals beside the floats, tall strong women walked along, their saris furled about their legs, almost up to their knees. These women held with their hands huge brass lamps on their heads. The burners without chimneys sent up big flares of light. The women looked like caryatids supporting their great weights.

Now there was a strange sight. Men appeared among the floats, running along the side of the street—tiger men, their bodies painted in tiger stripes, naked except for a loin cloth to which was attached a tiger tail. They wore tiger masks and held their arms up before them, their hands curved into tiger claws. "Tell me about the tigers, Tai!" I was seized with curiosity about them. Tai did not answer directly. She had ways of evading certain of my questions. It was easy now because there was constant change before our eyes, and there was the steady roar of music, cars, and crowd in our ears.

"See, Akka, how darling the little girls are in that float in their best frocks—and see the little boy in the rajah costume sitting just below that big Ganesh." I was entranced and entertained with the spectacle but my legs were aching. All the fatigue of travel was settling in on me. The procession went on and on, each

float covered with garlands, some of gaudy paper, some of real flowers. The pipes and drums were louder and there were more men with kerosene flares; there were more of the goddess women with the lamps and more tiger men running here and there in mischief. The Ganeshes were larger now, sitting serene in their decorations. I thought it was too bad the elephant head could not sway his trunk from side to side and move his four hands for the crowd, but he did not need to—they adored him as he was.

All at once Tai turned her wrist, looked closely at her watch. "Akka, it is eleven o'clock. You are far too tired. We must go." I begged to stay.

"But I can never see it again, Tai. I want to see the big Ganeshes.

Tai got up and said firmly, "Come Akka, or you will be sick."

Mukund went with us. It was easy for us to walk along in front of the crowd to the intersection; I hoped a tiger man would come along in the procession as we moved by it, but luck was with Tai. We had to wait for a break to cross, but on the other side there was no crowd on the street we had come by. Our rickshaw was waiting there. Mukund was urged to return to his family and the procession.

Once we were in the rickshaw the driver pedaled vigorously off with us. The warmth of the Indian night was pleasant as we rode along. The stars seemed clear and close to us. Back in our rooms at the Mount Hotel, we tumbled into our clean sheets, exhausted.

2

The next morning, our spirits were light when we went in to our breakfast of tea, boiled eggs and toast. Tai turned the toast over several times but decided that it had been heated enough to make it safe for me; it was almost burned. She demanded oranges "Orange

season full on in Nagpur and no oranges on your tables!" Around the dining room, the men were sitting each at his table, newspapers before them. All of them were looking at us a little except the blond Englishman. All of the tables had oranges for breakfast after that.

The rickshaw of the night before was standing outside. Cars were waiting for the men; they had business connections. Tai proposed we go to the Government Emporium. It was quite near. Later in the morning we were to visit her brother's family, and Tai's elder sister's. It was not proper to go on the calls until after ten. The first meal of the day would be over then and it would be a suitable time.

Tai and I found the two of us a comfortable fit in the seat of the rickshaw. The previous evening I had had Tai part of the time on my lap. We had been jammed in while Mukund rode, but now we were comfortable. Tai had made the driver dust the rickshaw out before we got in and had told him, "If you expect us to ride with you, you must clean your rickshaw." When we wheeled out into the road, it was full of boys, small to middle sized, wearing khaki shorts, white shirts, with black hair shining. They were half-trotting after a man, he too in white shirt and khaki shorts. "Schoolboys," said Tai, "out for exercise drill with their schoolmaster. One of the public schools is near here—we will pass it." Around the corner we went by it; the building, a two story brick rectangle was out of repair; the yard was tramped earth. Girls wearing blue skirts and white blouses were standing in ranks going through drills. Tai said, "Oh, Alla, after your fine school buildings and play grounds—"

I broke in, "Tai, when I was a child our buildings were no better than this and we had just a school yard of dirt, hard packed by our own feet as we played."

The Government Emporium was around the next corner with a big sign over it. There were a few little shops around it, still closed, but an Indian man was unlocking the door of the Emporium.

Tai wanted me to be dazzled with the handicraft of

India, and I was. *She was glowing; I was excited, beside myself with the wealth of treasure. Shelves to ceiling height, glass counters were heaped high with handmade wares from every part of India. I wanted to look, to revel in each article: there were bolts and bolts of hand-spun, hand-woven, hand-blocked cotton. Tai helped me pick two pieces, a red and green with figures of Indian women and a blue and black with stripes of stylized elephants, trunk to tail. It was easy to select ivory salt spoons and picks, each handle pricked with a delicate carving and a brass bowl. Then I lost myself in tea cloths and napkins in the famous chikan embroidery, made in Lucknow for two hundred years for the rajahs. The cloths were lightly starched; their gauze beauty displayed over yellow tissue. The Indian man opened cloth after cloth. I couldn't make up my mind which of the beauties to take; Tai was getting restive. My husband's advice came to my aid. "When you have such difficulty deciding, take both. You do not often want things."* So I took the two forty-five inch cloths, one with an intricate leaf and flower design, the other with a circle of marching elephants, a dozen napkins for each cloth; and I selected two smaller cloths and half a dozen napkins for each. *The Indian man was delighted, and so was I, but Tai was pushing me to be through. I didn't try to buy more and we stopped at the Mount Hotel only long enough to lock the purchases in my big suitcase.*

It was past ten and getting hot as the rickshaw driver pedaled us along wide residential streets. We were late for the heavy traffic of bicycles wheeling to work. There were a few rickshaws, a few tongas and just a few cars. Most of the houses were low and behind walls; when there was a two-storied house, it was white stucco, peeling and in disrepair. Shrubbery and trees were scraggly. The street was so dusty even the wheels of our rickshaw threw up a cloud. We were going to Dhantoli, far out at the west of the city, one of the old sections where the best residences had been. We were going first to Tai's old home—her father's home where she had been born

and raised—Bhave's Bungalow, where now her brother and his family lived.

During the long hours in my home, Tai had filled my mind with the thread of story about her family and the major incidents in their lives. Now she devoted the minutes as we rode along to a review of her brother and his family.

Bhave, she called him not by his given but by the family name, was a civil servant in the government as her father had been. He was nine years younger than Tai. It was a tragedy that her father had died when this boy was just eleven. He was a quiet boy and grew up a quiet man. He did not push himself. The elder blind brother whom Tai revered and mourned, kept the bungalow running as it always had. Tai's elder sister already married, had lived her own life. *Usha* had married and gone to Bombay. Tai had married, but she had lived in the home from time to time since her husband's death. Bhave had been well married. His wife came from one of the old families but she had no elder woman in the household to guide and help her.

"Three daughters and at last a son were born to them," Tai explained, "but serious trouble came to the family. The eldest daughter at sixteen came down with scarlet fever and a serious kidney ailment developed. For months the girl lay on her bed, white, fragile, but filled with love and intelligence. Her two younger sisters sat by her constantly. At last she died. It seemed more than any of us could endure.

"The house was filled with grief and confusion. Suddenly my blind brother sickened and died. He was my strength all the years after my husband died. 'Tai,' he would say, 'You can do it'. In the despair after his death, suddenly the chance came for me to go to the United States. The letter came from Dr. Ghate with the offer of a scholarship. 'Tai, you have worked all these years to educate your sons. Now Madhu is a chemist, Mukund is a lawyer. They are married, established. It is time for you to get out and see the world.'

"I wanted to get away. It seemed more than I could

bear to be without the strength and encouragement of my blind brother. So I left for the United States."

We were riding along narrow residential streets; now we turned into a very narrow old street. The bungalows behind the walls were large, two-storied, but all of them needed repair. Tai said, "We are here." The gate was gone from the wall. There were gaps in the rows of mango trees at the sides of the courtyard. An enormous old Neem tree shaded the hard packed dirt in the front.

Tai closed her eyes. "Akka, it is so hard to come back and find your home changed. It was always so comfortable, so inviting," she spoke low in sorrow.

Along the front of the house there was a wide open verandah; above it a narrow balcony with dark, heavy old carving.

"Bhave has rented the lower part and is living upstairs. Come, I must face it."

There were steep cement steps, not part of the original house but already broken and crumbling. Halfway up, back from the steps, there was a small platform. The sun beat down on it. Tai said, "In my father's day there were easy steps up and a balcony, wide enough for our beds to lie crosswise all along the side of the house." Tai put her hand back to help me. We were well up on the narrow front balcony before anyone appeared. Tai whispered indignantly, "And they are expecting us."

One of the daughters came, then the other, girls of college age. (They attended Nagpur College for Women.) We entered a rather small room, like a sun porch. Tai stood still. There was purple and blue glass in the windows.

"I looked out through these windows when I was a child, Akka. I loved to see the world all green and purple."

I was silent but I too was a child again looking out the double windows on the stairs in my own home. The glass I looked through was ruby and gold and green. Tai and I both lost in thoughts of our childhood jumped when one of the girls asked me to be seated.

me that this was an old, old friend of her father's day, the widow of a former governor of United Province. The high gate opened before us; the servant had been standing waiting. He made a deep namaste to Tai. His face was wrinkled. He did not speak or smile but he was happy to see Tai again. His uniform was elaborate—a turban-like cap with much gold braid on the red trimming, epaulets, belt and cross sash also of red with gold fringe and braid. His uniform had been white once. It was not dirty now, just old—old like this whole establishment. Up two steps, we went directly into a small room opening off a large darkened drawing room. The small room had cane arm chairs with white cotton cushions and it was crowded with tables, English marble statues, and little glass cases full of mementos. I could see through the double doors, a large drawing room, serene, British in its furnishings. The shutters were over the windows, and there were long brocade draperies and figured carpets. The room was shadowed with the past.

The governor's widow came slowly through the drawing room her sari graceful about her tall thin person, palu over her head. Her sari a dark silk, too, had an ageless look. Tai made a deep namaste to the governor's widow. She smiled, a slow, gracious smile. Tai presented me. We sat. The servant stood behind his mistress' chair, his old back erect. The governor's widow led the conversation with a British accent, and offered tea. Tai explained that we had just had tea. Then I was asked about my journey and my first impressions of India. Tai's trip and study in the United States were mentioned. This was a very old woman, but she did not rest her back against her chair. Her hands did not tremble—they rested easily, lightly on her lap. Tai said we must go after the traditional fifteen minutes. The governor's widow rose, Tai made a deep namaste touching her foot to honor her. I made the usual namaste. The servant led us out, opened the gate, made a namaste. I looked closely at him. I couldn't see a sign of emotion, but he was holding himself with high pride.

It was a little triumph that Tai and I had paid a prompt, respectful call on his old mistress.

"Oh, Akka, I wish that you could have known the governor," Tai said as we climbed into the rickshaw which had come across the street for us. "He was trained as a lawyer, an Oxford graduate. He was one of our wisest politicians. In Central Provinces he stood between Gandhi and the British government, was fair to both. He was in the group of leaders that made our independence practical; but he was never lost to the people because he was at the top. I was just the daughter of his old friend but when I was home from school he would send for me—have me tell him all about how things were going, then encourage and advise me. Akka, with our independence now, India is just like a headstrong young man. We feel strength in our limbs, but there is that struggle ahead of us that a young man has, to get started and establish himself in the world."

Tai's elder sister lived in this same section but at a little distance. Tai seldom mentioned this sister, but when she did she scolded at her. "Oh, Akka, you know how I hate to make this call, but I'm not going to fail in my duty even if she does. You will see for yourself how it is. All the years she lived such an easy life with her husband. There was no struggle for the education of her children; she had no thought except for herself and them. Her husband is dead, but they still have the house and a small competence; all of them live there, as a united family.

The gate was gone from this wall too; there were a few mangy trees and a rutted path to the door. In the past, this had been a big, comfortable bungalow; now the stucco was crumbling, wood railings on the verandah rotten. One side looked in better condition, but Tai led me to a door in the run-down part. Children began to stream out, boys and girls from ten down to toddlers. Tai stood about in front of me to shield me from the pushing. She went directly in. A small, old woman in a wrinkled sari came hurrying from the back of the room.

fine intelligent faces and their questions to Tai were eager. Their smiles and friendliness extended to me, and they began to question me too. Tai had prepared me for questions.

"You know, Akka, you must be ready with answers."

"But what will they ask me?"

"People in the United States always asked me why the cow is sacred in India and about child marriage. I think in India they will ask you about Hollywood and about divorce."

One of the young lawyers looked full at me and said in a friendly way, "The United States is one of the most powerful nations in the world today, but why is the United States making so many preparations for war? Why are your people so afraid of war?"

I did the best I could, saying that we were wary because we had been caught unprepared in previous wars. Then I had to account for our numerous overseas bases—this with the accusation that we had colonial ambitions—and there was much talk from all of them about the arms and money that the United States was pouring into Pakistan to the hurt and embarrassment of India. One of them asked why we hated brown skin so in the United States and why when we preached equality and democracy we had segregation. This, I said, was our caste system. While legally it had been abolished, it would take as long for us to do away with it as it would take to do away with the caste system in India.

"Why does the United States do so much for other nations? What do you expect in return?"

I did my best to show us as a peaceful nation of good will. I didn't feel the young men were trying to harry me. After a long conversation Tai rose, and like a schoolteacher with perfect ease dismissed them. They left, still discussing the problems among themselves. "Oh, Tai," I said, "I know little enough about Hollywood and divorce but how can I answer wisely questions about foreign policy and politics?"

"Akka, it is hard for Indians to realize that there is a nation like the United States where they will do any

thing for anyone and expect nothing in return. It is only because I have been there that I know how your people are, that they have such infinite good will."

In the morning, Tai was up again at five, eager for another day in India. Our baths and our breakfast were prompt.

We were to call on Tai's two doctor brothers-in-law after ten. It was still early so Tai took the rickshaw over to Mukund's for an hour, and I sat with my letter pad on the porch. Tai was just driving back in when a thin, dark-skinned man came along from behind the hotel, walking along the driveway. He was dressed in worn, dirty-white trousers and a ragged shirt, but dangling from his belt were several rectangular wire cages and several more dangled from his hands; in each cage there were several mice fighting and struggling. I stood up, watching as the man walked away. Tai was laughing as she came up the steps.

"That is the mouse catcher, Akka."

"The mouse catcher?"

"He is one of the municipal mouse catchers. Each family as well as the hotel sets traps for mice. This man makes the rounds gathering them up in his cages."

"But what does he do with them?"

"Oh, he takes them out in the country and turns them loose in the fields. Come on, Akka."

Tai had made a habit of telling me about the family we were about to call on as we rode along in the rickshaw. We were to call on the Sathes this morning, brothers of Tai's husband. This family had been orphaned at an early age so they had never been a united family. Tai's husband had been headmaster in a school, teaching while he prepared for the law; these two younger brothers were doctors: eye, ear, nose, and throat specialists. Tai had just time to tell me that the one we were visiting first had three sons, one of them already a doctor, the other two in training—one in England, the other still doing premedical work in India—and one daughter just graduated from college, when our rickshaw pulled up to a corner building of brick. There

know it. If they are agreeable, marriage pledges will be exchanged between the families. Neither boy nor girl will be forced into a marriage, but lovemaking starts only after they are man and wife. Duty is the first goal.

"Oh, Akka, how many times I tell you these things. Now there is scarcely time to set you straight about the house where we are going. This is my uncle's house, my husband's uncle. He is an old man. His wife has been dead these many years. He is a doctor but also owns the large drugstore I pointed out to you in the bazaar. They have the chief place to fit glasses in Nagpur. He has an only daughter, widowed without children. She manages the house. My husband's younger brother was educated by this uncle and lives in the house as a son. His wife too has died. It was so tragic, such a fair, lovely young woman. She died just after the birth of her second boy. He has never been able to bring himself to remarry."

The rickshaw pulled up to a long bungalow, quite close to the street. There were walls in back but not enclosing it. It was dark stucco, old-looking but in repair, with a wide, heavy verandah. The sun shone down on the other side of the house, so the windows under the verandah were dark in the deep shadows. There were two entrances. "That end of the house is their offices," Tai said as she guided me to the farther entrance.

A stout, motherly woman in a dark sari met us with warm greetings. "Father is expecting you," she said, and led us from the room we had entered into a similar one just beyond. It was dark and cool and filled with furniture. The cane chairs had white cushions but the room seemed Victorian with the overcrowding of furnishings.

A little old man with white hair, a white mustache and a little wisp of white whiskers was briskly rocking in a small chair without arms. He got up quickly, received Tai's deep namaste, laughed at my small one, gave a quick jerk sideways to his head and said, "Tai, you have made your friend quite Indian; did you make

yourself American?" He sat down with a quick motion and began to rock again vigorously. The conversation was three sided. The daughter, too, had a mind of her own and expressed it. But in just a few minutes the door at the office end of the room opened and Tai's brother-in-law came in. He was the image of the little picture of Tai's husband that she carried always. In the shadowy, dark room, this dark, slender man with deep expressive eyes, sensitive face, and a little mustache, walked forward and made a namaste to us. Tai stiffened and I could see tears creeping out of her eyes. The old man's rocker made a creak on the floor; the woman wiped her palm across her eyes. Death had struck each one of these people. A lump arose in my throat; I too knew death.

The moment was broken by the clatter of the two boys coming into the room. Eight and ten years old, their oxfords were noisy in the quiet gloom. I noticed that Tai and the woman had not removed their sandals. The doctor had neat oxfords and the old doctor a comfortable pair of house slippers. In that instant, Tai was laughing and putting her hand on the head of each boy and saying, "Shabas" to both of them. I was telling the doctor, their father, that my grandsons were that exact age. Tai was talking fast; the old doctor was making peppery comments. The woman got up and hustled out, coming back quickly, a servant following her with a tray with tea. Books and papers were pushed from a table for the tray. Milk and sugar were put in all the cups without comment, and they were handed about. Then a plate was offered with English biscuits and round, tan balls.

"Oh," Tai said, "Laddus! You will love them, Akka. They are made of milk boiled with jaggery (a coarse, brown East Indian sugar made from palm sap) and with chunks of almonds added."

The old man broke in, "We have to have guests for them to make my favorite sweet."

The woman did not rise to defense, but Tai explained to me that she was a busy teacher of music.

Sister Day in Divali. When he was a very young boy, my brothers' schoolmate, without close relatives or friends, he spent much time in our home. He asked me to be his sister and I have stood in that relationship to him ever since.

"Gokhale's life is like a fairy tale. He lived as a poor orphan until he was eight years old, no one wanting him. One night late, a servant came for him and took him hastily to one of the big, wealthy homes of Nagpur. He knew that these were distant relatives but he had never been there before. Incense was strong in the home as he was rushed into a large dim bedroom. An old lady lay white and silent on the bed; servants stood about weeping. Gokhale was pushed close to the bed. Two servants lifted the old lady. Her eyes were open but she did not move. A man, later the boy found out he was a lawyer, put a pen in her hand, lifted her hand and guided her signature on a paper held by another servant. The lawyer took the pen from her hand and said, 'Come close and bow your head' to Gokhale. Her hand was put on his head, then carefully put back at her side. The servants slowly lifted her back on the pillow; wailing began. The lawyer, the paper tight in one hand, took hold of Gokhale and led him from the room. Outside he stopped, looking full at the boy. 'Gokhale, this is your paper of adoption. You are now the direct heir of this estate.'

"The old lady was dead. Gokhale never left the wealthy home. He was its master at eight years of age but the case was fought in the court for years. Jealousy and favor seeking kept Gokhale from having friends. He chose me as his sister, I was one of the few close to him. When he was eighteen the case was closed in the courts; he was judged the sole heir. He was wealthier than many native princes.

"Gokhale owned hundreds of villages before the government forced the landlords to sell. He still controls a great many. The money from the government for recompense he has invested in profitable blocks of buildings in Nagpur and in many other business ventures

He owns a match factory that has made a great deal of money. His predecessor in the estate, not the old lady but her husband, kept thousands of silver rupees in sacks in the basement of the house. When there were opportunities to make money, he always had silver in his hand. Gokhale keeps his money in the bank but he has the same money-making ability.

"Gokhale married as soon as he was adjudged the owner of the estate. He was eighteen and his bride fourteen. She came from a very good, a noble family in Amravti. She too treats me like a sister. They have four children. The Gokhales are very orthodox Hindus.

"Mrs. Gokhale lives the life of a wealthy Hindu woman. She goes to worship at the temple for Hanamun each evening. She is very religious. She rides some in their car. She goes to weddings at homes of friends. The elder son lives at a distance, the younger son is in college so she has only her daughters to come to her. There are eleven servants, so the management of the home is considerable. She looks after Gokhale's high standards in every way. She is a complete vegetarian and has never eaten food that was not prepared by her own servants or by the servants of relatives or close friends. Mr. Gokhale eats in hotels and he has traveled in Europe, but when they travel in India, Mrs. Gokhale's food is prepared by their own servants who accompany them. It was most unusual for her to come to the station platform to welcome us. She has never been in a bazaar or shop. The sari merchants run to her home with hundreds for her to choose from and the goldsmiths carry their whole stock to her."

As we rode along to Gokhale's, the streets were hot and crowded with cars and bicycles, rickshaws, tongas, a few cows straggling along. Tai said, "Now you see our famous sacred cows, but just wait till we get to Mathura for a real view of cows."

It was quite a distance to the suburb where he lived. We passed through small business areas, by a few school buildings, but most of the streets were bungalows behind walls. The very old-looking ones were large and

metal pitcher in his hands. Mr. Gokhale stepped up and held his hands over it. The servant poured water from the pitcher, stopped. Mr. Gokhale gave a quick little flick of his hands, stepped back. Tai stepped up. The servant poured water on her hands; she gave a quick little flick of her hands. Then I stepped up and the servant poured for me. The water was pleasantly warm. Before I could flick my hands, the servant pressed a small terry towel on me. Mrs. Gokhale was still standing back on the verandah just where we had left her. There were two large open doors, one at each side, leading into the dining room.

Mr. Gokhale's wooden sandals clicked as he led us in. The dining room was square, high ceilinged, tile floored, without windows—just the two large doors opening out onto the back verandah. Pushed against the wall between the doors was a kitchenette table, chrome legs gleaming, four chrome chairs pushed under it, a many-flowered plastic table cloth covering it, and on it an ornate heavy silver tea service. On the side wall standing side by side were an electric stove with twin ovens and a tall electric refrigerator. Mr. Gokhale looked at them and laughed. "I brought this kitchen equipment home with me when I went to England, but my wife has never connected it or used it, but she displays it."

In the angle of the other wall there were three low red lacquer seats with matching tables in front of them. Their carving looked Chinese. Two were close together on one wall. The other was set apart with wide space about it. Mr. Gokhale sat down cross-legged on the single seat, saying, "Tai tells me, Mrs. Armstrong, that you will like to do our Indian ways." I said, "Yes, indeed," and Tai helped me down, for the seat was only a few inches from the floor. My skirt was full so that I was able to crouch with my legs to the side with not quite so much pressure on my old bones. We had had to move in sideways to our seats too for the dinner had already been served on the red lacquer stands. They too were just a few inches from the floor and on them were big

was another fire hole and along the long wall were five more openings. All of them except the corner one had front openings as well as the fire hole on top. Pieces of wood still glowed in them, and several of the bright brass pots sat on top over the fire holes. Thus there were seven burners for the seven hot dishes of elaborate meals. We had had the simple family meal with five dishes.

In front squatted a small Indian woman in a snow-white sari. She did not look back at us even when Tai spoke.

"That woman is their cook. It is unusual for a woman to be a cook. When Mrs. Gokhale came into the household, there was a man already old but a marvelous cook. He lived on for years. This woman was the young wife he took in his old age; she assisted him. When at last he died, the Gokhales kept her on as cook. She cooks just as her husband did."

The kitchen floor was brick, smoothly laid, clean. There was not a table, not a cupboard in it, nothing but the corner "stove" with its seven fire holes and the cook.

As the three of us strolled along the balcony, Tai asked Mr. Gokhale if he would show me the silver. He was pleased as he said yes, he would call the servant to open the chests. He made one sharp little clap of his hands as we walked back into the central hall. An old, old servant was coming faster than we were to the chests. A chain circled his dhoti and ended in a large bunch of keys that he held in his hand. He was so thin and so old he was like dark leather. Tai was explaining "This is their oldest and most trusted servant. He has been with them for years on end. He does all the locking and unlocking for the household." The thin old brown hands in a single movement inserted the key, turned the lock and lifted the heavy lid. Then he opened the second chest. The chests were a yard square; they stood as high as buffets, their wood frames were two inches thick and they were gleaming full to the very top with silver.

he asked laughingly. "It is very good for the digestion."

Immediately he left the room again. "The little hallway out that door leads to the Gokhale's bedroom. They keep the jewelry in a safe in their bedroom," Tai explained. "This old man servant with the keys and another old and trusted man clean and guard the bedroom. There is always one of them squatted outside the door. I am the only other person that enters their bedroom; even their children do not have that privilege. A Hindu bedroom is sacred to man and wife."

Mr. Gokhale was coming back, his arms outstretched. He moved them a little. There was a mellow clank and the blaze of gold. His fingers were full of golden bangles. He stood all puffy with pride and pleasure as Tai took each pair from him and handed it to me. I looked with delight on wide gold bracelets, medium wide bracelets and narrow bangles with intricate turning. Each pair I laid on the tray. There were a dozen pairs, twenty-four beautiful bracelets. Mr. Gokhale said, "Come, Tai." They began a golden procession. Next they brought belts—plain wide ones, solid gold, "22 carat," Tai said. There were disks of gold held with links, each disk a beautiful design. There were belts of intertwined loops. Tai said, "Gold belts were very fashionable at one time." Then they brought golden chains, such a heap of them I did not count, all so heavy that a woman would be weighted down. I looked the longest at the heaviest one. A chain went around the neck; from it hung a cascade of seven chains of graduated length, the longest falling well below the waist. Each of these strands was composed of carved golden beads of graduated sizes, the smallest the size of a pea, the largest as big as my thumb. "That necklace is of special significance," Tai said. "It is the gift of a husband to his wife after she has borne him a son. It is worn only on certain auspicious occasions."

Now they began to bring necklaces set with stones. Necklace after necklace was heavy with rubies. Then came pearls. There were a few necklaces set with

emeralds and last a choker of flexible gold lozenges enameled in delicate flowers, with a large emerald hanging from each lozenge. My eyes were dazzled. I was no longer capable of counting or remembering details. Now they came with handfuls of earrings: solid gold, set with rubies, set with pearls, set with emeralds. The heap of jewels on the tray had grown higher, higher, heavier and heavier. It glowed with gold, scintillated with jewels. I looked and looked my fill and I used all the extravagant phrases: "a treasure trove, a king's ransom." Mr. Gokhale was sprawled out on one of the chairs eating cardamom and enjoying himself. By turning my head a little I could half see Mrs. Gokhale, her face impassive, but I could feel her delight in my joy at seeing the jewelry. Tai was by my side lifting up special pieces for my inspection. All at once she rose and said, "We must go." Gokhale clapped his hands. The old servant appeared instantly and bore away the tray heaped so high with treasure. The compote with the spices still stood open within easy reach of my hand. Gently I put each petal back in place, rose to go.

We moved with Mr. Gokhale to the back balcony; I expressed my enjoyment of the Indian food, my pleasure in seeing the silver and my delight in the rare treat of seeing the jewelry. Mr. Gokhale hummed and hawed like a wealthy gentleman making an impressive front to the world, but at heart, he was modest. As we started down the center hall, Mrs. Gokhale appeared from behind us. She made *namaste* to me and a deep *namaste* to Tai. There were no bangles on her arms, no jewels in her ears.

Outside the watch dogs were barking and straining at their chains, a servant by each dog as we walked down the steps.

Outside the flowers were so fragrant, Tai explained, "Tropical heat makes flowers more fragrant."

We expressed our pleasures again as Mr. Gokhale was reminding us that we were to go on a *hurda party* with them the next day.

of his villages about ten miles out. He was so friendly, so talkative at the moment that I made bold, well aware I was being a crude American, to ask, "How many villages do you have?" He answered with a bland look "I take pride in still numbering them in three figures but who knows what the government will do next?" I was sitting between Mrs. Gokhale and Tai. They were both so little and brown, drawn close in their corners, both of them silent. There I sat, a big, bold American asking personal questions. Gokhale was addressing his remarks directly to me, and he was speaking pridefully, "I have always made it my custom and my duty to visit each of my villages once a year. Where they are close together, I can look in on several in a day. But for the most part it takes a day for each village by the time I talk matters over with the overseer, inspect the well, check the fields and go over the orange grove. The best oranges in India are grown around Nagpur and I have many orange groves. The overseer's wife will have prepared special food to please me and I must eat. It is quite a task and a hardship to be away from home so much."

There was no evidence of a village but all at once the driver pulled to the side of the road and into a narrow rutted mud track and stopped. Standing just ahead of us there was a bullock cart with two high wooden wheels, a small wood body with hooded top of woven wickerwork closed down over it. A young Indian, in clean white shirt and loin cloth, stood at the head of the bullocks. They were pale gray, large well-fed animals with pale gray blankets appliqued in a pink design, the blankets were fitted over their humps like tea cosies. I was amused, delighted. Mr. Gokhale said, "It's still a little warm for blankets but I wanted you to see what good care we take of our bullocks in winter." I thought, "Winter in Nagpur?" Tai had told me that the leaves would fall in a single day in a brisk wind, new leaves already pushing out on the branches so the trees were never bare. Nagpur with its orange grove temperature, 60° in the mornings, no frost let alone ice or snow, but with hand appliqued, hand-quilted beautiful blankets for bullocks, sons of sacred cows.

"Get out, Tai; get out, Mrs. Armstrong." Mr. Gokhale was laughing now. "You are to ride in to the village in state in a bullock cart. You wanted to ride in every kind of vehicle in India. I will introduce you to bullock carts, the only way ladies rode in the country in India in the past."

Tai and I got out of the car; we were laughing. Mrs. Gokhale sat motionless but she was laughing too. There was no way into the cart except to clamber up over the high wheel. I knew now why Tai had not objected to my full-skirted cotton dress. It took all of Tai's lifting and pushing and shoving to get me over that high wheel; I fairly tumbled into the cart. Mr. Gokhale was laughing harder and harder at the spectacle I made. Tai, of course, got herself in with ease and grace.

Indian women have much strength in their legs from the constant bending they do in serving at meals. It is only the very few wealthy like Mrs. Gokhale who do not serve the food. In homes even when there are two or three servants, the wife serves. Added to this there is their agility in getting up and down from the floor and endurance from sitting cross-legged. The few surreptitious glances I had of Indian women's legs revealed them as quite heavy and very muscular, quite like the legs of ballet dancers.

Once I was able to pull myself up into a sitting position in the bullock cart, I found myself in an enclosure square at both ends and with the reed woven hood so close over the top I could not sit upright. Both the hood and the body of the cart were lined with padded, clean white cotton cloth. We sat directly on the bottom of the cart and there were about a dozen pillows, they too in clean white cotton covers. We began tucking these behind our backs, our legs straight out in front of us. Mr. Gokhale was looking in, saying "Ready?"

"Ready," Tai replied. "Chalo [start, make haste]."

The driver leaped up, sitting on the boards that made the front of the cart. He spoke; the bullocks put their heads forward, pulled, and the huge wooden wheels began to creak forward on the rough road. Be-

fore I had time to think how it felt to ride in a bullock cart, the driver was urging the bullocks. Faster and faster they walked, the cart bumping up and down. And then he had them at a trot. The cart was bouncing up and down, swaying sideways; we were being thrown against its hard wooden sides. I was yelling "Aste! Aste!" to the driver (slowly, easy—one of my few Indian words). Tai was screaming at him, then telling me that his orders were to drive us in as fast as the bullocks would go. Tai's arms were around me. She was holding me to her, trying to keep my body from banging so hard against the sides and bottom of the cart. She was ordering the driver in her most severe voice. His reply brought no let-up in our torture. "What does he say, Tai?"

"Just that he must obey the master's orders or he will be beaten."

The road curved and went up and down small hills. "Is Gokhale following us?"

Tai looked back. "No, he will not come until we are at the village, for fear of panicking the bullocks."

"Tell the driver Gokhale cannot see him."

Tai gave stern orders again. This time the driver slowed; the bullocks too had had enough. He kept calling out to them but they plodded along in their normal slow step. Even at this pace, we were shaken and tossed.

"My poor Akka!" Tai kept saying. "Your body will be a mass of bruises. Gokhale did not realize how roughly we would be thrown. He meant this only as a fun."

It seemed forever to me before we stopped. It took all of Tai's skill to get me out. I was sore, shaken and trembling. Gokhale's car was in sight. Tai cajoled me, "Gather yourself together, Akka; Gokhale must not know."

Gokhale's car bounced slowly in. He was out, laughing about his little joke and teasingly asking me how I liked to travel by bullock cart. I countered by declaring it a wonderful mode of travel but saying that Nagpur cotton pillows were not as soft as American upholstery

Mrs. Gokhale was out of the car and laughing too. I said "Shabas" to the driver who was standing by the bullocks. I praised the speed of the animals and the driver. Tai said something to him and to Gokhale in Hindi. The driver made the usual quick jerk of his head to one side, assent and understanding, and walked the bullocks away. Tai had as usual made Gokhale and the driver feel that they had had a triumph. The overseer of the village, a tall young Indian man in khaki trousers and shirt, was standing by.

Gokhale had a cane in his hand, a stout cane of dark polished wood. This did not leave his hand or the reach of his hand the entire time of our stay in the village. "Had the zamindar [landowner] carried a sign of authority for ages past or was this for protection?" I wondered. A high mud wall curved before us to our left but directly in front, up five steps, was a verandah with no window or other opening in the wall of the mud hut. It had a roof of thatch, and wood railings on the verandah. The steps up and the floor were hard mud. I looked back the way we had come. The two-wheeled path curved and disappeared in the rough land. There were trees outside the wall, many of them mangoes.

Gokhale led the way, the overseer behind him, close like a shadow. I was next, Tai and Mrs. Gokhale walking together behind me. Above on the balcony, I saw there was a passage or way through. Gokhale tapped the wall to the right of us. "This is the overseer's house, and this is my room in the house." This room was kept ready for Gokhale at all times. It was never used for any other purpose. Down the mud steps, we stopped on the hard-packed ground while Gokhale engaged in a brief conversation with the overseer.

The village was like a melon with the top cut off. The mud wall circled high all around. We had come in through a square hole like the one cut to plug a melon. Around the rim, up steps, were small mud porches and back of them a room or two. With a flourish of his cane Gokhale pointed up. "This is the overseer's house and that is his kitchen and his wife." Above us,

on a small mud verandah, by a bit of fire in a niche in the mud wall, her hand steadying a brass pot, squatted a young woman. Hanuman, the monkey god, had been freshly painted on the wall behind her. The smoke was pungent.

We walked down the village streets where some buffalos and bullocks lay at their ease on the ground, secured by chains around their necks to stakes. They were by a water trough molded of mud. There was a continuous row of mud huts in front of the wall where women were squatted on the high mud floor of the verandahs in the shade of their thatched roofs. I felt like letting my hand slide over the smooth hard mud. All along the street there were shapes in mud, pleasing the eye with gentle curves, smooth, hard, clean and golden in the late afternoon sun. There was the feeling of beauty, the emotion of sculpture in the shape of the huts, the center, the inner life of this Indian mud village.

Soon we came out into an area of trees and coarse grass and we were at the village well. It was open with a waist high curb of cement. There were ropes for lowering the big brass lotas, and there was a wooden device, a Persian wheel, that by day was operated by buffalo. For some of the wells, the buffalo walked in a circle around the well; in this one he went up and down quite a sharp incline, keeping the buckets on the device pouring water out for the irrigation of the orange grove.

Not one word was spoken as we walked through the village nor as we stopped for a minute near the well. I stood far back from the well. I knew that I must not touch it in any way with my hands nor defile it by letting my shoes near it. I remembered Tai's telling me that one of the early ways of missionaries was to creep into a village and throw bread into the well. The villagers had to use the water, there was no other way. But that broke their caste. There was now no place for them in the Indian system of life. They were lost from their ancient religion, their life now a miserable

tragedy. It was easy then for the missionaries to take them to the mission church.

Ahead of us lay the orange grove, row upon row of quite low trees, pruned, cultivated, and hanging full of golden fruit. Tai and I were exclaiming. Both of us had reached up and picked an orange, peeled and were eating it. Mrs. Gokhale's hand stole out from her sari, half grasped an orange on a low branch. Ripe, it fell into her hand. She stood holding it out from her, an expression of bewilderment on her face. She had followed Tai's lead to pick a fruit, but I knew that it was the first time she had ever done such a thing. The overseer in that instant stretched out his hand to her, palm up, as if he were offering a silver tray. Mrs. Gokhale dropped the fruit into it. Mr. Gokhale quickly said, "Come, we will have the servants pick oranges to take with us."

We walked on a path at the edge of the grove and came to a skirting row of tall trees. A band of coarse grass lay the width of the shade of the trees, opening out into a field. "The cotton has been picked," Mr. Gokhale said; "Beyond, and on the other side of the orange grove lie the vegetable fields. We raise a quantity of produce here for the Nagpur market. But come a few steps farther on to the place where we will have our *hurda party*."

A white cloth was spread on the grass; shiny green banana leaves were spaced on it, with a silver tumbler and silver lota at each place. At one end there were several covered brass pots and several tiffin cases (brass tiered containers). Beyond these was a rectangle of glowing embers; two servants in white shirts and dhotis crouched beside it. Beside the cloth spread on the grass were durris, blanket-like rugs. Mrs. Gokhale sat down by the food containers. Tai helped me down beside her; my bones were so sore that it was hard to crouch. Tai dropped down easily beside me. Mr. Gokhale went to the other side of the cloth and seated himself.

There was no ceremonial hand washing but Tai poured water from her lota onto her hands, stretching them so the water fell on the grass. She poured some

into her tumbler, took water in her mouth, rinsed and spat it out. Then she took a drink and presently spat it out too saying, "There is oil in the water. The water must have been carried in a kerosene tin." Consternation ensued. Mrs. Gokhale tasted and spat; Mr. Gokhale tasted and spat. The servants left the fire and hovered. The agitated talk was in Hindi. Tai at last said, "Did you bring tea in a thermos?" Mr. Gokhale's assent was of one who sees escape from a major crisis. At that moment the jawar heads roasting on the coals flamed up, burned. Quickly the older servant poked out the fire with a long green stick. Fresh heads (they were feathery heads about the size of a fist, each having a couple dozen grains) were put to roast. The servant squatted close by the fire again, watching closely for the moment when the jawar would be just right. Tai said to me in her lowest voice, "Not one drop of the water, Akka; it is from the village well." Tai had stirred up the rumpus to keep me from drinking unboiled water. The tea had been brought from their home.

The servant was putting down tea at our places. He was offering food. Mrs. Gokhale stood up watching the grain. She was agitated although she was silent, her face passive, her hands making only trained gestures, but you could feel her tension. The servants lifted out a jawar head, pulling off the grain into Mr. Gokhale's outstretched hands.

"Mrs. Armstrong," Gokhale said. I held out my hands. "Eat before it cools," he ordered. I burned my mouth.

"Delicious," I exclaimed.

Mr. Gokhale was beaming, Mrs. Gokhale relaxed, we began to enjoy the picnic. I praised the salads and sweets. It is not Indian custom to praise but they enjoyed my American flattery. The servants now were bringing the jawar heads direct to each one of us, shelling them hot into our hands. "Tai," Mr. Gokhale said, "we haven't had a *hurda party* in years. Mrs. Armstrong has revived one of our pleasant old customs."

Mrs. Gokhale ate very little. I wondered whether she was still upset over the water, but with Indian dis-

cipline of mind, what was done was done, not rehashed American style, so I decided that her small meal was customary. I was remembering the customs Tai had related: "When a woman is thirty-five she begins to eat sparingly at the evening meal; by the time she is fifty she will take just a cup of tea." But at this *hurda party* Tai behaved the American way with me. We stuffed ourselves. Mr. Gokhale too was letting the servant serve him again and again. The *hurda* as well as the food in the containers on the cloth was offered until I could hold no more.

We sat now on the blankets at ease except that I squirmed; squatting didn't suit my American body and the bruises from the bullock cart ride were hurting. Mr. Gokhale was relaxed and expansive so I managed a question. "These villagers live in the same house their life long?" I knew from the glimpse I had had of the village that there was loving possession, roots deep.

"Oh," Gokhale said, "the girls shift about when they are married, but families live for generations under the same roof."

I thought again of the beauty of the mud forms, the sweet simplicity of the life and I knew Gokhale was a part of the village. Like rain and heat, they could not control him but they accepted what came, and with this age-old acceptance Gokhale was just a part of the village.

I eased myself into another position and said tentatively, "How do they get money?"

Gokhale spoke a little quickly, a little defensively. "Each man is paid a wage."

"But their food?" I spoke softly. I knew I was being very American.

"The crops are mine," he said in a positive, wealthy tone. "Each family takes what he needs to eat; they would take it anyway when it lies there before them. It is better for it to be free."

Tai was up on her feet saying, "Come, Akka, you will be so stiff from sitting on the ground we will have to use a bullock to pull you up."

The shadows were so heavy in the orange grove as

we walked slowly back that I could see oranges only on the trees nearest us. A haze of smoke hung in the still warm air over the mud huts. There was a fragrance to it, not the acrid smell of fire but the pungent softness of old dung. I thought, "Dung in the fire, dung in the mud curves, but what is dung but part of the continuity of life?" Now men were squatted on the high mud porches, some with white hair and beards. Back in the shadows squatted the women. The oxen and buffalos were kneeling by their troughs. Little boys were running fast up the steps before us and running and yelling behind us. The men and women were silent, but there was a contented hum along with the fragrance of the smoke. At the overseer's hut we hesitated. Mr. Gokhale talked briefly with him. The wife was still sitting by the fire in its niche. Light flickered from it for an instant. There was a baby lying close, easily, in the cradle of the mother's lap.

Tai took hold of me to help me up the mud steps, through the passageway and down the outside steps. The mango trees by the wall made it dark. We climbed into the car, fitting our legs around tall baskets of oranges. The ledge back of the seat too was piled high with oranges. As we bumped along on the narrow ruts, oranges kept falling down on us till Tai pulled them down and filled her lap and mine. Mrs. Gokhale sat withdrawn, silent. She looked and seemed like a round little brown idol. Mr. Gokhale was content. He did not talk; Tai and I too were silent. Out on the main road, the car moved more swiftly. We passed one train of ox-carts piled high with cotton, but we were the only car on the road.

Tai said to me a number of times, "Gokhale is going to offer me some proposition." On his visits, he did act like a schoolboy concealing something. He would sit with his head a little down, stealing glances at Tai. "Why don't you ask him?" I said with American bluntness. Tai replied, "It will wait. He feels it is unsuitable or he would out with it."

She had told me that Gokhale was a member of the

Hindu Mahasabha. This party had been controlled by orthodox Hindus, but they were militant, striving to recreate India as a Hindu domain, striving to bring back the old Hindu culture.

But even the Hindu "tomorrow" could not stay the fact that we would be leaving Nagpur in a few days. This morning Baba Sahib was sitting waiting. Tai made namaste and said "Baba Sahib" and so did I. She was in her gay morning mood. Tai was like their Ragas (songs). She had a mood for certain times of day as well as for certain events. She started to sit in one of the cane chairs but Gokhale was up saying, "Tai, let us go inside."

Tai disregarded him and said, "Sit here, Akka," and pointed to one of the chairs. While I would ask certain abrupt and direct questions, it was my code of manners to leave when private matters were discussed. Tai knew this and detained me by indicating a seat.

Gokhale, now that he spoke, came directly to the point. "Tai, I want you to go to Nasig to the military school encampment for two weeks to take charge of the women's cultural program. This encampment is for the wives and sisters of the students of the school. The Governor of Bombay will open the program; his daughter will be your co-worker. She will handle the general arrangements—housing, food. Tai, I want you to handle the cultural arrangements, some lectures on Hindu literature, drama, dance. You can do some of the lectures and invite in anyone you wish to help and we can get some performers from Bombay."

Tai was just as direct now that the proposition was made. "Baba Sahib," she spoke sharply, "you know that I take no part in politics. What are the implications of this encampment?"

The tussle of words was on. Baba Sahib argued that the mothers and sisters who would attend were orthodox Hindu women who took no part in politics. Tai countered with the fact that the military school was supported by the Mahasabha Party and the boys attending were all sons of Mahasabha members. Baba

Sahib brought up the presence of the Governor of Bombay; "And the daughter will be your co-worker; that will make everything clear."

Tai spoke indignantly now. "It is just a promise that the governor's daughter will come. She can easily make an excuse at the last minute. Baba Sahib, I cannot get myself into a position with political implications. Anyway my time for the present must be devoted to traveling with Akka."

This gave him a new point of attack. "This will be an unusual experience for Mrs. Armstrong. You will have your own bungalow, your own servants and she will be in close contact with a group of Hindu women she could meet in no other way. These are women who engage in no activities out of the home."

There was no mention of rupees but it was clear that Tai was to receive a good fee in addition to luxurious rooms and food for us. Also it was stressed that this was to be a time for relaxation for the women and for us. It would be no effort for Tai to organize the program. She could have made these arrangements with the greatest of ease and she could have talked to the women on some of the occasions and whomever she wanted for programs was hers to command. Baba Sahib pressed hard for consent. Tai pressed him in return for assurance that there were no political implications in the encampment. Later to me privately she expressed the wish that we could go. She too thought it would be an unusual experience for me. But she said, "I have been away from India for several years. I am not in touch with the political climate. And it is my policy to keep myself completely clear of politics."

The last time Baba Sahib talked about the encampment with us he was quite desperate. He did so want an affirmative answer. He kept his temper for he didn't dare do otherwise with Tai, but he was accustomed to having his slightest wish obeyed. Tai said, "Baba Sahib, are you *only* considering your own wishes in this matter? You must consider my position. I must have time.

I will write you after we reach Delhi." He exclaimed that the matter must be definite soon. After he was gone Tai said, "In Delhi, I have friends who will advise me. I do not know what the political situation is in India at the present moment."

Once Gokhale was gone Tai and I had to hurry with our dressing, then go out and get into the waiting rickshaw. This morning we were going to Bitte High School. Tai had been headmistress there for seven years before she came to the United States. This was their Honors Day for academic achievement. Tai was to give the speech and present the prizes. As we jolted along in the rickshaw, throwing up a screen of dust, I thought that I certainly needed three silk suits. I seemed to be wearing them all the time.

When we reached the school it was surrounded by a high wall with bordering trees. Inside the high wooden double gate there was a large courtyard with a shallow stage set up at one end faced by rows and rows of low benches, then rows of chairs on the hard packed earth. It was like an enormous flower bed with bees at the sweetness, for there was a loud hum of girls' voices. Tai had told me she had had twelve hundred girls on her rolls, the largest girls' school in Central Provinces, seventh through twelfth grades. Here they were, packed tightly, a few front rows of girls under twelve in blouses and skirts but the older girls in saris—blues, pinks, yellows, lavenders, greens.

I was seated at the side with a little group of men, the board members who solemnly shook their heads to one side and told me that Mrs. Sathé was always changing things but she had put their school at the top. Tai was escorted to the platform and seated behind a table with the present headmistress. Along one side was a table piled with wrapped objects. Behind the curtains there was movement, the girls on the committees doing their last minute scurrying about. At once the program began, Tai had made a well timed entrance as she did on every occasion.

The program began with a group of girls singing, then reading poems and short stories. The girls were shy for they had written them. Then there was a big hum of anticipation as out from the one wing came a man, thin and dark, with two older boys with drums. The boys squatted at the front to one side of the stage, tuned an instant on the drums; the man now half-squatted in the center of the stage. He began to sing. The Hindi words carried out full in Indian cadence, languorous and inviting, a love ballad; I knew by the *sighs and rapt faces of the girls*. Then he sang a lively folk song with much action and the girls were laughing. Now there was folk song after folk song; the girls were beside themselves with amusement. Then he launched into a stirring piece of music. Maharashtrians are warriors and this was one of their ancient battle songs. At last he began another ballad, its quarter tones plaintive. He was closing with a theme of love. Swiftly he was away with his drummers, straight down from the stage and out through the big wooden gate.

The headmistress rose. English was still the first language in the schools, but she spoke in Hindi. After her few words, Tai rose and came forward to the edge of the platform. She talked for only five minutes but there was a hush, the quiet when people listen to each word: like an emanation you could feel the affection, the respect from the girls flowing up to Tai, their beloved teacher. Then Tai moved over to the table of prizes. An older girl, pretty and sweet in a pink sari, came from the wings and stood beside her to read the names of the prize winners. The seventh grade was first. Shyly they came and stood while Tai handed them the coveted reward, a book in English. Girls were back of the prize table, selecting and handing the books to Tai. Most of the girls receiving prizes were seated at the ends of their rows. But sometimes a girl would have to climb out over her mates. They were so crowded in that this caused much merriment, hushed quickly by the teachers. There were four or five prizes in each grade; each subject had a prize. The older girls glowed

with pride but all of them moved swiftly, and gracefully, as they walked up to and back from the platform. Once it was over, Tai came down and was surrounded with girls eager for a word, a smile.

5

In the afternoon, I awakened, after an hour's sleep under the fan, thinking about Mukund and Mandakini. Tai always said, "poor Mukund" and "dear Mandakini" when she talked about them. Tai's husband, a headmaster at the time of his death, had been studying to become a lawyer; Mukund had carried out his father's dream and studied for the law. Tai would say, "Mukund's horoscope is not good. It has been borne out in his life. When the government united Bombay and Central Provinces into one state, the High Court moved to Bombay. This is the kind of thing that happens to Mukund. He was doing so well, but part of his income was from the government and part from private practice. It seems best that he continue in Nagpur but it cuts his income in half."

I thought about Mandakini a good deal. I knew from the picture of her that Tai had had with her that Mandakini was slender, tall, dark-skinned with a long oval face. I found her now very appealing. She was more than slender; she was thin but supple as a willow branch. Her face was a sweet oval, its darkness reflecting her ill health.

I looked at my watch. It was six o'clock. I had to stop considering Tai's family, get up and dress. Soon one of Tai's brother's daughters came in a rickshaw to escort me to the Puja. Mukund and Mandakini were giving in honor of Tai's safe return. The girl attended the women's college in Nagpur. She was shy but eager to ask me questions about travel. Our rickshaw went past a large open area. Tai had told me

this had been the parade ground for the British but was now kept for open air meetings. It was packed with Indian people. They were sitting on the ground so close together that the many children with them could not stir around. More people were pushing in. There was no sign of a speaker's platform and for such a large gathering there was silence, almost utter silence. I turned to the niece who explained. "Dr. Ambedkar, one of the leaders in the government, died suddenly today. He was from Nagpur, born an outcast. The people have gathered to do him honor. In the evening more and more will come."

"Will there be speakers later?"

"No, they will just sit silent to mourn for him."

The men and women were in white, 29,000 of them, the whiteness of their clothes covered the brown earth, their dark faces were bowed down. It was a disciplined crowd, but discipline was of each individual for there were no police, no restrictions of any kind, just thousand upon thousand of white-clad, silent mourners squatting silently on the ground.

We turned from the main thoroughfare onto a narrow street going off at an angle. Brown wooden buildings, two and three stories high, came right to the rough cobbles. Narrow balconies overhung the street; crowds swarmed along on foot. The air between the buildings was close. I chatted on with the girl, hoping that conditions would be better where Mukund lived. There were no trees, no courtyards, just ancient buildings shouldering so close to their neighbors that they seemed to prop one another up. At last we stopped at the corner of a narrow cross street. Steep stairs went up the side of the wada.

Tai had been watching for me; she was coming down the stairs "Be careful, Akka, let me help you up" At the second floor the steps turned at right angles onto a narrow balcony which led across and was the entrance to ten apartments in the row. We, however, turned into the first door. There was a bright electric light on although there was a window in the wall. The room

was small and it was full of people. Tai drew me into the next room. It too had a window on the outside wall. This room was the same size as the front room but crowded full of furniture. There was a big charpoy, bedding piled thick on it, Sujata, the baby, was asleep in the midst of it. There was a wardrobe, a desk, a chair, more chairs. Everything had been pushed here to make the front room clear for the guests. I could see a third room beyond, similar in size, a kitchen.

Tai pulled a comfortable cane armchair loose and put it in the front room tight against the wall, almost in the doorway between the two rooms. Mukund came to me at once, making a deep namaste to me. His brown face was shining with pleasure as he stood chatting, then he began to bring and present young Indian couples to me. Most of them were in their twenties or early thirties. The women were trim and lovely in silk saris; the men wore western trousers and coats, threadbare, often ragged. The introductions included the information that the man was a lawyer, a teacher or a doctor; one was a librarian. There were a few older people, several of these men wearing long white dhotis. Mukund introduced them proudly as "my friends from the Bar Association." Many of the guests said they lived in the wada or nearby.

The crowd was in constant motion. As they shifted, I could see over in one corner, sitting cross-legged on a square of white cloth, an old Indian man. His white hair, white shirt, and white dhoti made his thin Indian face and body look very dark. People coming in were pushing their way directly to him. They made deep namastes and as they did this they put an offering before him. There were oranges, fruits, packets of rice, small bags of wheat and dahl, and quite a few silver rupees. The namaste was held till the man put his hand out and touched their heads. Mukund saw my glances. "That is our family priest, Aunt. A large share of his support comes from the offerings at Pujas."

Tea was being served and plates of savories and sweets were being passed. Tai was supervising and the

brother's two daughters were serving. There was heat and the hum of talk. Men were crowding out on the balcony, some of them sat on the railing and leaned against the supporting posts. The crowd was thinning out now. Mukund came again to talk with me, saying that they had had a good many regrets from people going to the square to mourn and that people were leaving early to go there too. The priest stood up, he was thin but quite tall. Tai and Mukund had brought a couple of cloth carrying bags and they helped him pack up his fruit and packets and followed him out. Now women were squatting in rows along the walls. The large crowd was gone. I, stiff from sitting, got up and walked back through the house, to stand a minute in the air on the back balcony. The kitchen was quite bare but there was the glint of brass on a high shelf and on some shelves set in the wall there was looped a garland of flowers caught over a frame. In it on a silver platform stood an idol of Krishna, incense curling up from a silver holder set in front of him. For the moment, I had forgotten Tai's injunction not to enter a kitchen, not even to put my foot on the threshold. It was as if some force had carried me when I walked across that kitchen to the back balcony and looked out. Back of me Mandakini was squatted low, cooking on a charcoal brazier. She was cooking food that was being served at the Puja. Her dark body in a dark sari, her dark hair, her dark face curved down over the low fire. I was not aware at the moment that I had polluted the room and Tai never did mention it to me, but I know that rites of purification had to be gone through and they had to re-install the idol.

I felt Tai's hand on my arm. She said, "Come, Akka, sit again. You must be weary after this crowd." The brother's daughters were moving about clearing up. People had put plates on the floor; there was the usual litter after parties. Both the girls were large, not moving with Tai's grace and they were excited, happy over having helped serve at a Puja. Soon Mandakini came and stood beside me, Sujata in her arms

awake now but having slept most of the time on the bed. Pramila was with her, wearing the pale yellow organdy frock Tai had brought for her from the United States, and Anil neat in shirt and shorts. Mandakini's face was alight; she was so proud of her Puja.

Just then a strong, tall, young Indian man came in like a whirlwind. He seized Tai in his arms, lifted her off her feet, and turned round and round with her. He had flesh on his bones, vitality, charm. In a minute he was being presented and making a namaste to me. He was Madhurani's, the elder daughter-in-law's, youngest brother. Tai was teasing him. "Not married yet?" He let out a big sigh. "So hard on me, but my family will not deviate from custom and they can't get my next older brother home from his atomic job in Canada to marry him off and I cannot marry before him." Mukund and Mandakini were pleased with his arrival. He was the manager of a glass factory near Bombay, just in Nagpur for the day and by chance had heard we were there. Mandakini hurried to serve him tea and sweets. It was late but we lingered visiting. At last Tai said, "Mukund, you must go and fetch our rickshaw." The rickshaws were not permitted to park in the old narrow streets. People there blew a shrill whistle and one would come, but Mukund had to go for our driver for he would not know the signal.

Tai's speech was very British for she was tired and emotional as we rode back to the Mount Hotel. "Oh, Akka, what will you think of India? My people, all the people are so poor." It was a hard fact for me, too, to face that Tai's son and most of his friends had to live in such old housing.

Tai had me up the next morning at nearly five o'clock. We were leaving Nagpur to make a two-day stop at Amravti, before we went north to Mathura where Madhu, the elder son, and his family lived. After we washed and dressed, I asked Tai if she had written the usual travel prayer to Lord Krishna. At once she sat down and wrote it, tucking it into the folds of her sari at her waist. The manager had arranged early

breakfast and the sweeper who brought the hot water and cleaned the bathroom was squatted on the back porch. The door was open a crack to indicate his presence. Tai said, "All the servants will be about this morning, expecting." I asked what she would be giving and coaxed to give more. It was my pocketbook that would pay but Tai handled the money. "Akka," she said sternly, "you would only spoil our servants. I will give what is due. The lavish way of Americans does not earn respect; it just makes discontent." I thought to myself, "Tai has her weakness too. She will give the sweeper double the amount anyone else would give him."

When we walked along the front balcony on the way to breakfast, the servant in his scrap of dhoti and ragged shirt put down his watering pot and made a namaste to us. I squeezed Tai's hand and whispered sharply, "Give! We have enjoyed the plants."

None of the other hotel guests were up so early and the headwaiter did not leave our table; he stood stiffly back of Tai's chair. The bearer who carried the food scarcely left us to bring our breakfast. Once we were through I took a piece of bread and went over by the lattice where the sparrows sat and crumbled the bread on the floor. Tai said, "Always so persistent, Akka."

"Tai, it won't hurt to feed the sparrows this one last time."

Tai had been smiling but now she looked somber. "Is it to be the birds or the children, Akka? You saw them carrying away in their hands the scraps thrown out behind the hotel."

Several times I had crept out on the little back porch to watch thin ragged little boys and girls quarreling and grabbing bits of food from the refuse pile. And I had seen a thin desperate mongrel dog, her tits dragging down empty, nose over the heap.

When I came back from feeding the birds, the dining room servants were beaming. I suspected that my plea, "The servants will expect something extra because I'm an American," had moved Tai to give more than usual. In the lobby, Tai settled our hotel bill.

carefully checking each item, and we bid the young manager goodbye. He had been so eager to tell his problems to Tai. We found Baba Sahib in one of the cane chairs on the balcony, waiting for us. His old driver was standing morosely by the car. The rickshaw driver was back in his place at the cab stand sitting asleep, humped down in his rickshaw with the ragged dirty old curtains back on that Tai had made him take off. His rickshaw was not shined this morning but dusty and dirty as it had been when we arrived. Standing by our door were our room boy and a helper ready to carry our bags and our holdalls to the car. It was hard for Tai to leave Nagpur, her home town, so soon. On the way to the station Tai was still pointing out buildings and places of interest.

Railroad stations in India are large and well built of brick in a solid, substantial British way. The railroad stations and trains were still the ones left by the British. As our car drew up, the usual long line of porters in their faded red shirts and turbans pushed about us. Tai got our baggage onto the heads and arms of four of them; she had been aghast that we had six at Bombay. Already I had seen that porters serving Indians carried bag on top of bag on their heads and in their arms. The waiting room was a maelstrom, the floor was covered with people squatting in the midst of piles of luggage. Crowds of people were pushing in and out. There were queues waiting at the wickets. In the waiting room there was a low roar of noise; there were smells and color, every kind of color, and there were every kind of costume and every kind of people.

We followed close on the heels of the porters (our tickets had been bought ahead), through the turnstile, past the ceiling-high heavy screen barrier between the waiting room and the platform. Our train had just come in. It made an hour-long stop at Nagpur. The porters tried to push into our compartment before the luggage of the previous occupant was out. All along the train people were pushing in so Tai paid the porters extra to hold our compartment from intruders. Already gathered round us were almost as many rela-

tives and friends as had met us. Mrs. Gokhale was there, her smooth, plain little brown face beaming. She had a red dot on her forehead and quite small single diamonds in her ears. Her white sari was drawn close about her, the palu completely covering her arms, but there was a glimpse of a heavy golden chain at her neck. She was holding out to us two nosegays with slender green leaves streaming down.

Mandakini was close by. She had garlands for us and others were coming up with garlands till our necks were heavy again with the sweet soft flowers. Tai's brother was there, a grave, quiet man, his wife came up and made a namaste to us. The two daughters were there, shy on the edge of the crowd, and the young son was pushing in and out and calling to me in a shrill voice not to forget his stamps. The older sister's doctor son was there and several of that family and representatives from the Sathe families and many friends.

Mukund had put down Anil and Pramila. Mandakini held Sujata in her arms. Mukund was bringing a pink tissue-wrapped parcel from his pocket and holding it out to me. Tai whispered, "Open it." It was a silver rose water shaker, bulbous at the bottom for the rose water, with a slender stem ending in a rose pierced for the shaking. Mrs. Gokhale now produced a small paper container. It held in a scrap of magenta tissue a silver box, chased in a leaf pattern, a box to hold the after-meal spices—cloves, cardamom.

Everyone was smiling and talking and pressing about us. How they loved and admired Tai. I too felt a warmth of friendship from these relatives and friends. At the last minute we got into our compartment. The Gokhales were in the front of the group with Mr. Gokhale calling out as our train pulled slowly out, "Let me know soon, Tai." He was referring to his proposition for Tai to be a leader at the camp. Tai leaned far, far out, waving as long as we could see even a bit of color back of us. I held tightly to her as usual.

"Oh, Akka, always so fearful," but she threw herself back on the wide green leather seat with great contentment. She had had a good welcome home.

Amravti

WE HAD ONLY ABOUT an hour on the train to the junction where Mrs. Mahajan, Tai's devoted friend, would meet us. I could see her as she had stood there that early morning as we had passed them on our journey from Bombay to Nagpur.

Shortly before we reached the junction, Tai told me that just over, beyond where we could see, was the village where Gandhi had been born. Tai always said Gandhiji; the ji added to his name was an intimate term of affection and respect. Again she recounted Gandhi's first important speech (the first time he had advocated noncooperation, nonviolence), that had been made in Nagpur, and how she, a college student, had joined the Student Volunteers to work for him. How many times she had told me about the personal conference she had had with Gandhi, how she had talked with him for more than an hour. He had called her "Daughter" and she on his advice had left the government college because it was under the direction of the British. she said again, "Oh, Akka, if only once you could have

desolate looking large bungalow. There was a high wooden fence, a few dusty trees and a long stretch of open ground to the side with what looked to me a mosque just beyond it. Tai whispered to me, "I wrote Mrs. Mahajan to make reservations for us. This is a government guest house, a Dak bungalow."

I followed Tai up onto the long balcony and into a large dining room. A dozen tables scattered about, dusty, unused, but with dirty white cloths on every table. Tai went over to a closed door at the back and pounded. She pounded again and after quite a wait the door opened and a fat, dirty Indian appeared. Tai spoke sharply, "The rooms are ready for Mrs. Sathe." It was not a question but a demand. He didn't reply but shuffled across the room. Mrs. Mahajan had come in too. The three of us followed the bearer through a lounge room and a hall, up to a door. He had a bunch of keys jangling from his belt and slowly looked at each one, he tried several and at last unlocked the door. The room was large and full of dusty chairs and tables—a sitting room; beyond there was another large room, its only furnishing a large table and two large wooden beds with dirty tapes making the springs—no mattresses, no bedding and no nets. Doors opened out from both rooms onto the porch. The keys were in those locks. The man stood making no move to open them. Crisply Tai ordered them unlocked and told the man to bring in our luggage.

Tai and her friend were visiting. I sat down on the edge of one of the dusty chairs in the sitting room. The bearer's motions were the opposite of Tai's swift orders. Slowly he shuffled back and forth bringing one piece of luggage at a time. The chauffeur was standing stiffly by the Morris car. He made no move to help the bearer. Tai ordered our holdalls put on the beds, our bags lifted onto the big table that was pushed against the wall. She ordered the rooms swept and dusted. The bearer stood before her, his head, his shirt, and his dhoti drooping. Tai said with a snort, "No more sleeping until you have cleaned, and remember we must have breakfast at eight

in the morning and hot water." She spoke to him in English and again at some length in Hindi.

I asked to go the bathroom. Tai went ahead of me into the room beyond our bedroom. This apparently was a dressing room; it had a walnut Victorian dresser with a small oval mirror, and on the wall a larger framed mirror with a big crack across it. Through the next door was the bathroom. It had a stone bathing slab with a hole in the floor for the drain; beside it was a bucket, the water in it had been there a long time. There was a rickety washstand with a battered tin basin and on the other side a commode, a wooden frame with a wooden cover down over the bucket insert. The room smelled putrid. Tai threw open the outside door and said, "We'll have to get the stink out of here."

Back in the car, we rode a couple of squares away along a comfortable residence street and into the driveway of a two-story bungalow with a hedge of shrubs along the road and at the sides. There was a rectangle of yard, made into a badminton court with the net fastened at one side but down on the ground at the other. "Our son loved to play badminton when he was at home," Mrs. Mahajan explained. "Our daughter seldom plays but neighbor children come so we leave it up."

The bungalow was set quite high; the steps were wide and long and had pots of plants on both ends. The veranda had a row of plants too. Mr. Mahajan appeared in the doorway welcoming us. He was so plain and easy and friendly. A hall with a bare hall tree divided the house. On one side of the hall, the door was shut. We went through the open door on the other side into a large living room full of furniture. Again I noticed that Indian houses in the old style were very bare but Indian homes in Western style were stuffed with furniture. There was a big square table in the center littered with newspapers, magazines, and books, with a green-shaded electric light hanging low over it. There were dusty bookcases, some shelves piled with magazines; others stuffed with books lined the walls

Hung high over them were several small framed pictures of Kashmir and over one was a large calendar with a colored picture of Indian girls dancing. On one wall there were several windows, barred, with no glass panes but wooden shutters half-closed against the sun. Two small wood and woven cane settees were in front of the bookcases and chairs filled the rest of the space. There were thin cushions, white cotton covered in the seats and white cotton covers on the backs of each piece of furniture. The house was dark and cool.

Tai and I and Mr. Mahajan sat down chatting. Tai at once asked about the son, Surendra. Mr. Mahajan proudly told her how high he was passing in his examinations at the university. He was majoring in mathematics and in a year or two at most would be ready for Oxford. Mrs. Mahajan went out into an adjoining room that I could see was a dining room. Soon she came for us and seated the four of us at the dining table drawn close to the end of the room, the whole wall of which was open (there were shutter-like doors that could be closed) out onto a verandah. From this, wings of the house went out on both sides enclosing an open courtyard with a high wall at the back. One big tree shaded it but there was a clutter of shrubs and a garden bed or two. I could see a dark room at the side, and back in the shadow of the door, I could see a dark servant woman glowering at me. There were china plates and silver knives and forks at our places. At once a lovely girl came in carrying a shiny brass pot and began serving us. Tai said, "This is the Mahajans' daughter, Sunanda. She is in her first year of college." There was no other introduction. The father kept gently teasing the girl as she filled his plate again and again. She made no reply but had a soft sweet smile on her face. Her heavy black hair hung in a shining braid down her back over the thin white cotton of her sari. Her every move was perfect grace. She was slender and about as tall as Tai. Her dark eyes, her oval face, her whole person was beautiful. I looked at the angust mother and at the

plain father—both with such dignity, such serenity—and I admired the lovely daughter their love had brought forth.

After the meal of Indian food—rice, a curry, several vegetables cooked together, quite hot with red pepper that Tai had let me eat without comment except to say, "Take more rice, Akka," we sat again in the living room. Soon Mr. Mahajan had to go back to the college where he was registrar and Mrs. Mahajan and Tai began to plan our time. We were to make calls today; the next day go with another friend who had charge of the Indian government village program of twenty-two villages and four community centers, to visit a village; and the next day we were to spend the afternoon with Mrs. Mahajan at a sports festival, the final contest for prizes of all the schools in her district. She was "Inspector of Schools" for this district.

Late in the afternoon, we returned to the Dak bungalow. Tai had the rickshaw stop out in the road. Just up the street was the mosque with its onion-shaped dome—beyond it were brick buildings. They had housed a boarding school for Moslem boys. Tai looked at me. This was one of the times when a hard glitter came into her eyes.

"Akka, this is the exact spot where we met the Moslems marching out from their school when we had the big Hindu-Moslem riots in Amravti. I've told you about it. All the inhabitants were ordered by the British to stay in, but my boys and their friends, college age, were determined to go out. What could I do but go with them? Indians had always been forbidden to have firearms or knives over six inches long. Lathis, stout poles about 5 feet long, too were forbidden except to the police. But we did have stout poles. These we concealed by using them secured close to the ceilings of our verandahs to dry saris over, like a clothes line. They looked innocent to the British eyes who used to inspect our houses. Some of the boys had bound short knives on the tips; others used the poles.

"We gathered every bit of cloth we had except my best saris. Some thin cotton ones we tore in two and

made tight padded turbans to protect our heads. Then we wound our upper bodies with everything we could get. When we went out on the street others joined us. The Hindus were converging from all over the city at this point." Tai's eyes now were fixed, cold and dark as steel. "We met the Moslems just at this corner. The fight started. At last the Moslems broke and ran." Tai caught her breath quickly and started walking at a brisk pace toward the guest house. She had not told of the actual fighting. I tried to get her to go on.

"Were many injured?" I didn't dare say killed.

She was ahead of me turning into the gate. She did not answer. Tai, a Maharashtrian, of the warrior caste, whose ancestors fought and almost drove back the Moslems when they came over the mountains from Persia into India, was still meeting the Moslems in battle.

It was dark and cool in our rooms, after the hot street, but it was just as dusty. Tai walked on through to the bathroom. I could hear her banging the outside door open. I heard a swish as she emptied the bucket. She had dashed water on her hands and face and was shaking her hands with quick little motions as she came back. Towels are not needed in that tropical climate.

"It's cleaner, Akka, but leave the door open. There is no one to see in, living beyond here. The Indian government closed the Moslem school at the Partition."

We were going to rest for an hour; I was so worn that I went to sleep immediately, waking at the sharp clapping of Tai's hands. She was standing out in the hall summoning the bearer. When I came out of the dressing room, my suit on, she was making a second round of clapping. With irritation she said, "These government servants have no care of the guests." Just then the fat, greasy bearer shambled into view, his eyes drooping with sleep. Tai harangued him again about the dust in our rooms and ordered him to get a car for us.

There must have been a sign saying, "Maternity Hospital and X-ray Clinic" but in the dark I did not see it. Tai had me out of the car and up a flight of steps

on the side of the building to the second floor before I had time to look around. At a landing we turned back on a short flight of steps that led us to a balcony that crossed the second floor front of the building. Shutters were closed across it so the electric light did not show from the street. At the sound of Tai's sandals and my slippers on the wooden floor, a boy about ten years old, slight in build and with an immature look like most young Indian boys, came from the more brightly lighted adjoining living quarters. The boy made namaste to Tai and said, "Do you remember me, Mrs. Sathe?" Tai greeted him with warmth, telling him of course she remembered him; she had known him very well ever since he had been born. She told him that I was Mrs. Armstrong, her friend from the United States. The boy looked gravely at me and made namaste to me. Then he told us that his mother would come in a few minutes, would we please come in and wait.

At once a young woman in a white sari with a tight white cap on her head came hurrying across the landing and up the short flight of steps. She was beaming. Tai was on her feet by the time she reached us. The woman made a deep namaste, hands together to full upward stretch, then bowing her body, hands swinging down until they touched Tai's sandals. Tai put her hand out on her head. Then the woman was up, looking deep into Tai's eyes and saying, "Oh, Mrs. Sathe, my dear, dear teacher."

Tai introduced me, calling her Dr. Apte. The young woman shook hands with me and said, "Wouldn't you like to see my hospital? I must go back at once and check a patient; I have just delivered a baby." She led the way at a brisk pace down the short flight, across the landing, down more steps, through corridors, our leather soles clicking on tile. Tai was close behind her and I kept close enough to hear the conversation.

"You remember I fitted this old house up as a maternity hospital of fifteen beds? Now I have added a new wing with twenty more beds. The delivery room is in the new wing." She went through a doorway. Tai

after her, but I hesitated outside. A nurse was holding a gown; the doctor slipped her arms into it. Then the nurse held rubber gloves for her to put on. She didn't scrub her hands, but undoubtedly she had for the delivery. As she turned around for the gown to be tied, she said, "Oh, come in, Mrs. Armstrong. We do use sterile methods, but our patients are so exposed to every kind of germ in their daily lives that we have little to fear from contamination."

Inside, I stood for a minute; I was beside a cart on which lay a young woman, looking up at me. Her brown face was tremulous, but she was not disturbed by our entrance. Dr. Apte and Tai had gone into an adjoining room. I could hear a baby crying sharply. I smiled at the young mother; she dropped her eyes shyly but a smile formed on her lips. The walls in the room were white tiled. I walked a few steps and looked into the brightly lighted whiteness of the adjoining room. There stood the doctor in her cap and operating gown, holding a tiny brown baby up by his heels. He was bellowing. Tai and the doctor were inspecting him with laughing delight. Then the nurse took him and cuddled him in her arms. A second nurse handed her a little blanket and she wrapped the quieted baby. The doctor said, "Just a minute while I check the mother, then we can go."

I was full of questions.

"No, I do not use anesthetics in normal deliveries. It is almost unknown for a woman to cry out during labor or delivery. Of course, the maternal death rate is high in India as a whole, but we have many maternity hospitals and our mortality rate is good in them. I'm especially proud of mine." She gave me the figures and said, "It is as good as in the United States." Then she went on. "Most of my patients are from Amravti but when the midwife in a village gets scared or is unable to make the delivery, they bring the women in to the hospital. I never refuse them but those deliveries had difficulties to begin with and after a woman has been in labor perhaps for days, and has been brought miles in an ox-cart, the condition is serious. I don't lose all of them

by any means but that is where almost all of my fatalities occur."

The nurse now pulled off the rubber gloves, untied and took off the gown and the cap. Dr. Apte led us out. I looked again at the young mother; she had her little brown son close in her arms.

Down the corridor, we stopped at the door of a room. The doctor and Tai went in. Against the white sheets there was the sweet, brown face of a young Indian mother. Hovering beside the girl there was a sari-clad mother making an evening call. Squatted on the floor, her back to the wall but close to the bed, was a very dark-skinned Indian woman, a servant. The doctor exchanged some words with the patient. A baby, sound asleep, was lying in a bassinet close by the bed.

Out in the corridor, the doctor said, "I have just one more room I must stop in, then we can go over to my quarters and visit. All my new wing has rooms like the one you have just seen." As we clicked along on the tile, I could see the rooms. Most of the women were sitting up in their beds their babies in their arms; it was not quite bedtime. In every room there was a servant squatting on the floor and not a baby was crying.

The call was on a room in the old part of the hospital. There was tile, too, on these floors but the room did not look as fresh and sanitary and the bed, while it was metal, was not the new high type in the other room. There seemed to me to be a good many people in the room and a good deal of smoke. I counted four women besides the mother in the bed, all dark skinned, their saris faded colors. Two of them were squatted over braziers; there was a low glow of fire and the smell of food. One woman was feeding the woman in the bed; the other seemed to be supervising the whole operation. My face must have shown my surprise for the doctor laughed when she said, "Each patient brings servants or relatives with her. They bring their own food and cook their own meals. The servant bathes the mother, rubs her and keeps a constant watch. We can run this hospital at so much less cost for we only have to have nurses for delivery and supervision."

"Are your new rooms on the same basis?" I asked.

"Yes, I dread to think there may be a day when we will have to serve meals. This way they get just the food they want and have it just in the way they are accustomed to." The doctor went on. "This patient is a village girl brought in in terrible condition. She has a fine baby and is out of danger now. The delivery was difficult; it required all my skill but once the baby was born it was the care and devotion of her mother and these relatives that brought her through."

Now as we walked back towards the living quarters, I could see into more rooms. Most of the women in the old wing had gone to sleep. One or two dark figures squatted on the floor beside them. I didn't see bassinets and the doctor explained that only the most educated women use bassinets; the village women sleep with their babies in their arms. There was the odor of food, of smoke, none of antiseptics. There was a hush of rest and sleep; not a baby was crying.

We didn't go up the stairs but on to the first floor front of the building. The first room was her office, a small room; the adjoining room, of the same size, was her husband's office. Beyond, she opened the door, and put on a bright light. There was a large room full of X ray equipment of the latest design. She spoke proudly of her husband as an X-ray specialist. England returned, and she regretted that he was out so that he could not visit with us. Back upstairs, she took us into a well-lighted room, a combination dining room and kitchen. She had a shiny white kerosene stove and an electric refrigerator; there were four chairs and a table with chrome legs and a plastic tablecloth. We sat down for tea. The boy helped his mother serve us, passing the plates with savories and sweets. Soon Tai said that it was so late we would have to go. In the conversation, Dr. Apte told me what an inspiration Tai had been to her and I told of Tai's success in the United States.

The car was waiting for us outside. I was thankful to bump along the last stretch of road inside the Rest House grounds. Tai said, "Akka, you will be dead with all this visiting." She opened my bedroll and spread

it on the still dusty tapes of the bed. It was a Navarre bed—a wood frame with stout handwoven tapes about two inches wide going both ways, the tapes going around the bed frame so that they could be tightened. Indians speak of a Navarre bed as “very comfortable,” and it is. There was a dim electric globe in our bedroom, but none in the dressing room. In the bathroom, some light came in the open door. We were alone except somewhere, through many rooms and down many corridors, the Indian servant slept soundly.

Tai said, “Akka, put your moneybag under your pillow.”

I had told Tai I would be afraid at night in India and she had promised me that for a few rupees she would hire a girl to sleep across our doorway. This place was frightening, but I was too tired to remind Tai of her promise.

2

I opened my eyes in the morning to the shadowy big rooms, so full of the large pieces of furniture Indians had made for the British, all covered with a yellow film of Indian dust. I could hear Tai's sweet voice chanting her morning prayer accompanied by the splash of her bath water. Shutters and doors were open, the air was cool and still.

“Akka, Akka, come for your bath before your bucket of water is cold,” Tai called. She was wearing her green and white orlon and cotton sari from the United States. It shed dust and was cool. She advised me to put on my Indian cotton dress with the little jacket. It went with out saying that I would wear the small black velvet tam, white gloves, and leather shoulder bag that labeled me American. I was never once mistaken for British. I suppose my Midwestern accent, the shoulder bag, my slippers, my silk suits screamed “American.”

intelligence to keep the jeep in running order and to get it over oxcart ruts into the villages. The young man, neatly dressed in khaki pants, shirt and with a cap, was tall and slight with a dark, sensitive face. I was put in the center of the front seat so that I could see the countryside. Tai had heaved to get me up on the high step, then she herself leaped up lightly. I sat straight and pulled myself together as tightly as I could but I seemed to spread over too much of the seat. The driver had to have space to reach the clutch and brake of the jeep. Tai pulled me more to her side. She had her foot out on the step and seemed half out of the jeep.

The driver accelerated quickly out of the grounds and once we were on the road, we dashed away. Tai's palu blowing out and fluttering. She tucked it in at her waist. I put my arm around her tightly, but she pulled away from me. "Akka, don't always be so timid." There was a windshield, but air swept in at the sides. My white hair, not oiled like the black Indian hair, was blowing. The jeep was jolting up and down and from side to side sharply. I ignored her protest and linked my arm firmly in hers. She loved hanging over the edge of things: the Grand Canyon, the rail of the ship, the open door of a moving train. Tai was like a bird in your hand if you touched her. She couldn't bear restraint. She must have felt as if she were flying in the jeep; her sari was fluttering again. She didn't like it but I kept a tight hold on her.

There were big trees along the road, sometimes wells beside them; tongas were drawn up in the shade. There were trains of oxcarts on the road, piled high with cotton. I could see the irregular shape of small fields with no fences, most of them with the bare stalks of harvested cotton. Once in a while an Indian in loin-cloth was following a bullock with a wooden plough but the land looked barren, just brown dust blowing in the wind.

Several times I saw a small red flag flying high on a bamboo pole from a clump of trees that looked as if it might be in a village. I asked Tai, "Is that red flag a

sign that the village is communist?" Tai gave me a curt "No." I turned back and asked Mrs. Kamat "What does the red flag signify?"

Mrs. Kamat said vaguely, "Oh, it might mean there is a temple there."

I turned my head still more toward her. "Do you have trouble with communists in the villages?" I yelled at her through the roar of the jeep and the wind. "No," she yelled back, "when they want to get someone out of a job in the village, they run to me and tell me that he is a communist. Then if I say, 'Oh, no, he can't be,' they will say, 'Well, his cousins in the next village are communists.'"

All at once, we made a sudden turn to the right. It seemed to me we were driving right across the fields, but there was a dim track. The driver didn't slacken his speed; we were thrown up and down and from side to side. Soon we came to a road diked up, just being built, the dirt soft; our driver drove beside it. Now the road curved and turned. The ground looked rough although level and there were no trees. The jeep had to move so slowly over the rough track. We had to hold our balance but we could talk. Mrs. Kamat was explaining. This village had 750 people living in it. It had two new wells, of cement from the Indian government, labor from the villagers. Their new village center was completed. Their landlord had put up half the cost, which had paid for the material; the village had furnished the labor. They had a grade school and a high school cooperative with seven other villages. The children walked, some of them several miles, to school. The past year they had had three matriculates, two boys and a girl who had passed college entrance exams. The village was building a new high school; the landlord had donated thirty thousand rupees for it. I asked if there were any shops or potters or manufacturers of any kind but Mrs. Kamat said, "No, these people are agricultural."

A large group of trees came into view, a mud wall about six feet high in front and around them. A youth was standing in the arched opening. As we drew near,

he raised a trumpet and blew a fanfare and stepped to the side. As we drove in, I said to Tai, "News of our arrival has reached them. This visit is no surprise." We drove through a short winding narrow street. Stone blocks paved it, sloping to a gutter in the center. The backs of the huts shut it in like walls on both sides. There was not a person in sight. We made a rounding turn and there in front of a very long low building were all the villagers. In front of them were a couple dozen youths in formation, in khaki shorts and shirts, carrying instruments. As our jeep stopped, the band began to play, good and loud, "God Save the Queen."

The band played another and another English tune. They made them wail like Indian music. Mrs. Kamat advanced with Tai and me following.

A long rectangular yard was fenced off in front of the building, divided into three sections. To the far right, the yard was full of young children, boys and girls, facing us. Their shirts, shorts and frocks were clean but worn. Now the band marched into the center section. Other boys, most of them tall and gangliog, stood there, spaced in rows, facing the building. The band piled their instruments on the verandah and filled the gaps in the lines. A teacher appeared before them and began to call orders for calisthenics. The boys drilled with great vigor. We watched for about five minutes, then Mrs. Kamat said, "Come."

The third yard was full of women and girls. The men of the village stood about outside. They were dark skinned, in ragged, scanty dhotis or shorts; most of them had a shirt of sorts and most of them were thin with deep-set eyes.

To the right where the young children and the high school boys stood, the building was old with a thatched roof. It was really just poles and mud. But the section of building whose yard we were entering now had a cement finish, whitewashed over the bricks, and a red tile roof coming out over a narrow verandah. The women, many of them with babies on their hips, stood well back for us to walk along over to the right side of

the building. Mrs. Kamat said, "We will go first to the superintendent's office. He is the son-in-law of the landlord. The landlord is sick and old so this son-in-law has charge of everything for him." I turned to look back of me before I went in. The village looked like a mass of clay cubes, but in the center there was ground that went up to a sharp peak, higher than the thatched roofs. It looked as if there had been a hill of clay where everyone had dug away clay to use for building until there was just a pinnacle left. There was no vegetation on it; clinging on the pinnae was an old, old woman. Her hair was as white as mine, but even at that distance I could see that she was withered clear to her bones. I looked the other way at the women in the yard. All of them had the ends of their saris over their heads. All of them looked quite young.

"Come," Tai said.

We went in the door, the farthest to the right in the new section and found ourselves in an office with a desk and shelves full of dusty paper. Here we met first the superintendent of the school, the son-in-law of the landlord. He was six foot, stout and square of build, as strong in his personality as he was in his body. Our next introduction was to a shorter, thinner, older man, the principal of the high school. He was in a black cotton jacket and long white dhoti. He may have been fifty; he wore steel-rimmed glasses and his face and hands had the thin, wrinkled tight look of age. He had a gray little mustache and his hair was almost white under his Nehru cap. His eyes still were lively as he talked about the school. This little old man looked as if he had been a good teacher in a large school. He must have been at retirement age. Indian teachers receive pensions after twenty-five years of service. This old man was teaching his last days out in this village.

The third introduction was to the music teacher. He was as tall as the superintendent, his frame as large, but where the superintendent had square practical hands, the music teacher's hands were long and sensitive. The superintendent's face was square, but the

music teacher had a long face topped with a shock of thick unruly hair, through which he must have run those long sensitive fingers when he was in a frenzy of composition. His eyes were burning with dark deep fire, his lips were firm. There was a driving quality in him, pushing ahead not only his own creative gift but also the talents of everyone about him.

The two young men, not yet thirty, stood side by side, of even size, each complementing the other; it was almost as if they were yoked in a team. The thin old principal stood over at one side. He was not their driver; they were driven by inner strength and creativeness, but he was their admirer and friend. His old face shone as he said, "I want to show you the plaque we won in Delhi. Hundreds of schools were entered in contests in singing, dancing, plays. We won first in singing with an original composition by our music teacher and then our boys won the sweepstakes over all." He turned and pointed. On the wall back of him hung a large plaque two by three feet, with silver bosses and dedication inscriptions. Tai and I extended congratulations to all of them including Mrs. Kamat. Then he asked us to sit down and have tea. There were a couple of make-shift benches, the backs a board held up by slender-looking pieces of wood. Tai and I sat down on one of these, Mrs. Kamat on the other. The principal sat on a rickety chair back of the desk. The two young men squatted on the ragged matting at the side of the room. Tea was brought in by a couple of harried-looking young women, teachers. It was pale and cold from milk and sugar, slopping into the coarse, chipped plates. All of us drank it promptly. We were hardly through when Mrs. Kamat was on her feet.

Outside, the children and boys had gone into their buildings but the women with babies and toddlers were still standing in the yard we were passing through. Mrs. Kamat took us over to the door at the extreme left. Here stood another tall, competent looking woman. Her sari was white, looking all the whiter in comparison with the dingy, dark saris on the village women Mrs. Kamat

introduced her and told us that she was the midwife; she had had two years' training in a government school. The midwife led us proudly into a long narrow room, whitewashed and furnished with a table and locked cupboards. She told us she went to the homes for the deliveries but conducted a clinic for minor ailments here. She selected keys from the bunch tied to the corner of her palm, and opened her cupboards. She had some salves, a few pills, and a roll or two of bandages. It was too expensive to give shots of any kind. Then she brought out a good-sized leather bag. She looked at me with pride and said, "My obstetrical kit, a gift from the United States." She opened it. It was simple but complete, planned with surgical efficiency, shining new. I could hardly believe she had ever used it, but the woman's face was alight with security in its possession.

Mrs. Kamat as usual was leading us on. She did stop at the door to introduce to us a slim, tall girl in a clean, flowered sari. "This is the daughter of the midwife, one of our matriculates. She will be going to college in a few weeks now." Tai talked a minute to the girl; her shy, eager eyes looking directly into Tai's, she had the same competence evident in her mother. Now we went into the middle room. This space had been divided lengthwise into two narrow, long rooms. In the first room, the floor was packed with the squatting village women and their children. They pushed over, some this way, some that, as we walked through them to the end of the room. There was a rickety chair and one of the benches for us to sit on.

Mrs. Kamat did not sit down but Tai and I sat on the bench. Mrs. Kamat said a few words in Marathi then turned toward me. Tai hissed, "Get up, Akka. She has introduced you. Say a few words." Numb, I rose to my feet, looking into the dark, deep-set eyes of a hundred village women, dark ends of their saris over their heads, waiting. My throat tightened more with emotion than with fear. I said my words of friendship. Tai hissed behind me, "Stand for a minute." Two girls were working their way toward me from the side of the room.

"I told them about my operation."

The sun was shining down bright and hot on the yard as we stepped off the narrow porch. I looked up at the pinnacle. The old woman was still crouched there. Two benches were in front. The women came out and sat on the ground behind them, and the school children were marched in. The men of the village were standing outside the wire fence. We sat down facing the narrow porch. There was a great deal of activity. Young boys in khaki shorts and shirts with Nehru caps were milling about in front of us. Over at the side had been placed a musical instrument that looked like a melodeon. The music teacher, on a stool back of it, towered up, his hair wild. He was striking single notes on the instrument. Beside him were crouched two boys with drums. They were tuning the melon-shaped instruments; excitement in the throbbing notes.

I sat there feeling very American with my white face and my short skirt, thinking American thoughts. I counted the boys: ten of them, two drummers, the music teacher, the superintendent standing close by. In my mind's eye, I could see the boys and their teachers in a couple of oxcarts, a whole day's plodding journey into Amravti. I saw them in the railway station, buying from their scanty funds fourteen third-class tickets to Delhi. It was a day and a night on the train. I saw them finding their way in Delhi; seeking a bit of grass to sleep on, facing the excitement, the tension of the competition. I saw them winning, receiving the big plaque.

All at once the music teacher lifted both his hands, his long fingers like conductors' batons. Ten boys ranged themselves in a semicircle, facing us. They stood erect, their young brown faces impassive. The music teacher brought his hands sharply down on the keys of the instrument; the drums at that instant began to beat; the boys opened their mouths and sang. From the first note, the music was spirited. The boys' faces lighted with holy zeal; verse followed verse; flame seemed to run from the music teacher to the boys. This was not a prayer; the throbbing drums confirmed the martial

music. The emotional fervor was sustained. It ended on a wild, high triumphant note. There was the silence of success.

The music teacher broke the spell. He ran his hands through his hair, stood up, and the boys gathered around him and the superintendent. They walked away in a group. Mrs. Kamat stood up; Tai and I followed her, again weaving our way through the village women and children crouched on the ground. Tai's face and mine were alight with this spiritual experience. The village faces were calm, but again there was that emanation of emotion, this time of pride, not only in their boys, but in Mother India. How many many times the villagers must have listened to this song, I thought.

The jeep was waiting outside the wire fence. Mrs. Kamat climbed in telling us that we were to have a picnic meal in the woods back of the school. Tai boosted me up the high step and we were off, jolting and thrown about as the jeep crept along the rough track. Some distance back of the center stood the new high school. Mrs. Kamat had the jeep stop for us to look, but we didn't get out. The main skeleton of the structure was up, a good sized rectangular building of two stories, made of sun-dried bricks daubed with adobe. There was no window glass, of course, just steel bars; the roof was red tiles. Some parts looked almost complete; in other places the work was barely started. The construction had a disordered look, but the ambitious dream would be carried through by this superintendent and the music teacher who had won in Delhi with boys from a mud hut village.

The jeep crept on for some distance, back of the high school through a wide shallow piece of land with a shallow stream in the middle of it. The jeep splashed through, then up the other side to a considerable woodland. There were big old trees, not crowding close but parklike with grass for us to sit on. No one else had arrived so Tai told me to come and we would walk "just a minute."

We went back, Tai ran down to the water, slipped

out of her sandals and began to wade, holding her sari up, laughing with pleasure. Tai, like all Indians, had a penchant for water, especially to get her feet into it. I walked along the bank edge like an old mother hen with a duckling, but at last persuaded her that we must go back. She waded back slowly, staying in the stream till we reached the track where the jeep had crossed.

Up the steep bank, we saw the picnic party ready, white cloth spread on the grass, several young Indian women bending over putting banana leaves out for plates. The superintendent, the music teacher, and two other shorter young Indian men stood talking to Mrs. Kamat. The ayah was squatted on the grass, the little girl running into the woods a little way, then with little cries of pleasure back to the ayah's arms. Mrs. Kamat introduced us to the young men teachers and to the young women, also teachers. Mrs. Kamat said what a pleasure a picnic meal would be. She had brought just a bite for us to eat. They were distressed because they had no fork and spoon for me but Tai laughed and said, "Oh, Mrs. Armstrong is already Indian; she can follow our customs."

We sat down, I was next to the music teacher. The food was served from big brass-covered containers on the ground behind us. There was rice, still hot, and dahl and a mixture of vegetables quite hot with peppers. Mrs. Kamat had brought boiled eggs and chapatis. The young women served us; they were tidy in flowered saris; the ayah sat close by feeding the little girl. She herself did not eat until we were through and after the young women had eaten. There was no talking at first; the food was good and it was enjoyed. Then conversation began. At first the two younger men began to question, to bait me about the United States with the usual line, "Of course the United States is the wealthiest, most powerful country in the world today, but . . ." This time there was a new twist to the questions; they asked how people in our American villages really lived. It must be propaganda that our poor people lived well. I replied that our men in villages own a car, a radio, a television

set, and a house with electric lights, a bathroom, and sink in the kitchen with running water.

"Tai, tell them; you saw with your own eyes."

So Tai began, "The man who works in Mrs. Armstrong's yard as a gardener drives up in his own car; his wife also has her car; he owns his own house. The janitors (they would be sweepers in India) in the college buildings asked me to come to their homes. I went with one whose wife worked in the building too. We drove in their car, a good Ford. Their house was painted wood, five rooms. There was a television set in the main room, a radio in the kitchen. They had shiny enamel fixtures in the bathroom; the sink in the kitchen had hot and cold water. They had a refrigerator almost as high as the ceiling, full of food. I went down into the basement with the woman. They hollow out beneath their houses and have a whole set of rooms underneath. Down there they have a furnace to heat the house in the winter. The woman took me down to see her freezer, a big chest full of food. And how many lived in this house? Just three. The man and his wife and a daughter who attended the high school. Their son had graduated as an engineer at the college and had a high position with a big company. And, mind you, in India these people would be sweepers. I tell you, I went again and again in many villages and in cities to the homes of workers. All of them have these things and all of these workers are bulky, eating more food than we can dream about."

The music teacher began talking to me, then the young men were silent. He began by asking me about books in the United States. Did we have as many as people said we did? I discovered that the music teacher also taught literature in the high school. He had begun his talk to me in a soft voice but his voice rose. I could see that this man lived in a creative world. Everything he did was an impassioned composition. Now I listened to him, moved from the very beginning by his plea. "We print so few books in India. Teachers and especially college teachers have them but there are none in our villages. American books cost so much when

rupees are exchanged into dollars that we can't afford them. Oh, how I long to have a library for our school. We have just a couple of dozen volumes." I asked what kind of books he wanted. "Oh, the standard books, of course. Classics you call them, but more than that I want stories of the American way of life for our boys." Then he burst into torrents of words. "The Russians are flooding India with books." (I thought of the stalls in railroad stations, counters full of Russian-printed books—not an American publication for sale, and I thought of the many ads in the *Times of India*—"Russian Publications, cheap,"—then books listed for a rupee or even less.) On and on he went. "The Russians print in English, in Hindi, in Maharashtrian, in all the languages. Many of the village homes have these books. They bring them home when they sell their cotton in Amravti. I want our Indian boys to learn democracy by reading about American life but instead they read Russian propaganda."

There was a moment's silence. I thought frantically of where I, an American housewife, could get help for this crying need. I thought hopelessly and bitterly of the wealth and power of the United States, giving enormous grants to India—little of which seemed to come down to the village level where the Russians were doing so well. The music teacher's voice had gone deep into me. The fervor of the young boys in song, the impassioned throb of the drums echoed and re-echoed in my ears; I felt helpless.

Tai called to me, interrupting. "Come, Akka. Mrs. Kamat says that it is late and we must go." In this village it was like being roused again and again as dream followed dream. I passively followed and was loaded up in the jeep. Seated, I leaned in front of Tai and waved, calling "good-bye." Then I took a tight hold of her as we bumped down the embankment, the garland of cotton yarn swinging on my neck. As we splashed through the water, I twisted myself around. Through the small windows at the back of the jeep, I could see the music teacher, tall and strong and the superintendent just as

tall and just as strong, standing close together. The others were already a blur of white shirts and trousers and flowered saris.

We saw no one as we drove through the mud village. Out on the track beside the new road the sun was low, but the seven miles out to the main highway seemed shorter. Once we were out on it, I let Tai pull herself loose from my grasp. Out she leaned, her sari end fluttering. The jeep seemed like an intrusion on the old Indian road with its ox carts in trains of two and three plodding along. A group of ten of the heavy carts, piled high with cotton, was drawn up under one of the big roadside trees. Two tongas, the horses almost trotting, kept close to the side of the road as we went by. We passed a camel cart. Dust from the fields was blowing. We were the only motor on this road stream. This road was India as it had been for hundreds of years.

Mrs. Kamat let us out at the Mahajans'. They were waiting for us, sitting without the lights on, in the half darkness that gave a feeling of coolness in the tropical heat. I remembered how Tai had commented on people in the United States living in such a glare of light, and our conclusion that hot climates value shade; cold climates like the warmth of brightness. We chatted for a while before we had our evening meal. Already, I felt like a familiar friend in their bungalow. Afterward Tai and I walked slowly in the quiet dusk over to the Government Guest House.

3

After the usual breakfast struggle between the dirty bearer's apathy and Tai's demands for cleanliness, we walked into our sitting room to find a large Indian woman struggling up out of one of the chairs. The woman said her name before Tai remembered her. I sat down with them but soon Tai said, "Akka, you must

get ready for our appointment. I will come in a few minutes." It was more than a few minutes before I saw, from the open front doors of our bedroom, the woman walking heavily away. She had on a very good sari. Tai came in a little irritated, and scornful. It was obvious, even to me, that the woman had come with a mission. Tai did not take my outspoken way as easily in India as she had in the United States, but still I said, "Tai, what did the woman want?"

"Oh, she told me about her son; he is England returned; he has a good post as an engineer in Africa."

"But what has that to do with you, Tai?"

"Oh, Akka, don't you see; there is a marriageable girl in my family, my niece, Dr. Sathe's daughter."

"But what did she say? How did she go about it? Did she make the offer?"

"Akka, she wouldn't dare make a direct offer on a first call. She just felt me out around the subject."

"But how did you handle her?"

"I told her that we would be leaving tomorrow early and that there would be no time for her to see me again."

"But how do you know that your brother-in-law wouldn't consider the offer, a fine young engineer with a good salary?"

"Oh, Akka, the woman was mad to come to me. This is the only girl. The father and the brothers are devoted to her. She will have many offers. They would never let her go so far away as Africa. They will settle her well in Nagpur."

The rickshaw was waiting for us when we went out, I in a silk suit, Tai in dark silk sari, ready for another long day. It was a pleasant ride across Amravti. We were to have tea with Mrs. Dixit who was president of the Teachers Training College where Tai had worked and taught for many years. Our ride was along residential streets out almost to the edge of town. We could see ahead the college, brick buildings among trees on a good-sized campus, enclosed with a high brick wall broken by ornamental iron gates. The rickshaw drew

into the driveway of the substantial bungalow next door. A stout tall woman was hurrying through the college gateway toward us. She seized Tai's hands as we got down. "Tai, Tai, you are home in India again." She seemed pleased to meet me too. She led us back saying, "I want you to see my garden as we go into the house." There was a low fence and a gate into the enclosure that had trees, shrubs, and flowers in no order, but the flowers were *blooming profusely* and the air was scented with them. At one side there was a framework heavy with vines. "I call that my bower. I sit there often in the evening. My flowers live where they please in my garden. Whenever I plant, I choose a place I think the flowers will like." This feeling delighted me and Tai was pleased to show me a garden of flowers in India.

We went in through the back of the house. There was the bareness of tropical houses, but in front there was a comfortable reception room. Soon a girl brought in a tray, the tea already in the cups. The conversation was all about Tai's experiences in the United States. Directly we finished our tea, we walked over to the college.

The girls were eating. Mrs. Dixit and Tai settled on a brief view of the dormitory and a few classrooms for me to see a little of the college. The bedrooms were cubicles around an open court. Each of them had two spring cots with colorful, gay handwoven bedspreads pulled over them, not too tidily. There were no desks or chairs but in each room, sometimes at the foot of the beds, sometimes along the bit of wall, there were tin trunks painted black, decorated with roses, other flowers, and scrolls. Books and papers were piled or littered on these trunks and always there was a little folding mirror sitting on the clutter. The classrooms were large, with desks, chairs, and furnishings like American classrooms. Above a row of glass cases along a wall, there was a row of crude boxlike objects, each with a crude wheel. Mrs. Dixit caught my glance just as a young woman came in the door. She introduced her to us—she was a teacher—then asked her to show me a *charkha*, a spinning wheel

of us there were trees; the sun now was high and beating down but soon there would be shade.

Just in front of us the field was bare for the contests. Everywhere else there were groups of children standing, waiting, a teacher in charge. This was the final big event. There was an extensive program of physical education in the schools, all children participating. Contests were held in each grade, a team selected and drilled to meet in competition with other schools. Schools had been meeting in elimination contests. Now were the finals and the awarding of prizes. There was a confused chatter of excitement, children were well in order, no running about, but contest tension was high as the program began.

A small band advanced. Standing in front of the platform they played a fanfare and a brief spirited piece. Most of the instruments were trumpets and Indian drums. Mrs. Mahajan rose and declared the Sports Contest open. A little group of men, one of them with a whistle, all of them already looking harried, the long list of events in their hands, took charge. Children of five and six were first. They appeared in simple drills, little fists closed tight, throwing them out and in and up and down in calisthenics. Girls' groups competed against girls, boys against boys. The boys in the contests were uniformly in khaki shirts and shorts. The girls wore their school uniforms, blue skirts and white blouses, but some of the older girls were in costumes for dancing.

The whistle would blow; the event would be announced with the names of the participating schools. The voices blared out; I noticed they were using a hand microphone and also that there was a low-set microphone in front of Mrs. Mahajan. Children went through all kinds of athletic drills. Girls demonstrated what Tai told me was the art of self-defense with lathis, poles about four feet long. They thrust them about with grace and vigor. There were running races and hurdle races for boys and girls. People laughed and clapped and cheered winners. I looked at the dozens upon dozens

of thin brown legs, slender bodies, thin arms, and thin brown faces. There were only a few chubby ones among them but all of them had strength and grace.

The dancers were last, the older girls. Each school had a different dance in different costume. One was a village dance of sowing and reaping; one dance used hoops twined in colors; one had much leaping and posing. The most clapping went to the dancers with sinuous motions. The music was drums and the voices of the girls in song. There were no solo parts but, as always, there was one girl born to dance to whom all eyes turned.

The hot afternoon moved along. I wriggled in my chair and sweated. But I too was carried along not only with the thrill of the contest but with the sight and sound of the Indian children.

Dances over, the awarding of prizes began. All at once it was over. When we reached Mahajan's, Tai and I got out with Mrs. Mahajan to rest and have our evening meal before we made the promised call on Mrs. Gokhale's uncle, Mr. Despande.

It was dusk outside; there was little traffic. Tai told me that on our way we would pass the pedestaled bust of a nabob of Bihar State, father of Mr. Despande. "Do you remember, Akka? I told you so much about Despande. When I made the trip to Kashmir with the Gokhales, he went along. Now he is in his eighties. A tall man, he has always been vigorous, a lawyer with the keenest sort of mind, eminent in his profession. Oh Akka, he can quote by the hour from English poetry, and he knows so well how to make plays on words. It is such a fun to talk with him. He and I were the only ones to ride horseback. Each day horses would be brought for us, and we would ride up the trails into the mountains. His life has come to such a sad end. He has only one son and that son is a bitter disappointment, and there are no grandsons. Mrs. Gokhale, his niece, would do anything in the world for her uncle but with his pride there is little she can do."

Tai leaned forward and spoke to the driver. He

pulled close to an oblong island in the road. There, more than head high and four times life size, was the bust of Mr. Despande's father on a heavy ornate pedestal. "He had been the Nabob of Biwar State, the great man of Amravti; in his day, he secured the people in flood and famine. This bust was put up to commemorate him while he was still alive, but they forget Mr. Despande, his only son, who also has done much for Amravti."

We had come into a bazaar section. Most of the stalls were closed, but in a few a merchant squatted among his goods with a feeble electric light. The car stopped and I could see in a gap in the stalls an iron gate. The chauffeur got out, opened it. Tai continued, "The big house used to stand on a large tract of land, then the shops were built, till now the house is surrounded with them. The shops face the street so they cannot be seen or the voices heard in the home, but it is like being a prisoner behind their walls. Once Mr. Despande owned *all the buildings. Some he has had to sell when the son* had to have large sums of money, but they still live on the rents."

The chauffeur drove the Morris in, reclosed the gate and opened the car door for us. The courtyard was dark and heavy with vines. They covered the backs of the shops and vines drooped heavily down from the two-storied verandah of the immense house. Already this looked and felt like a disturbing dream. Everything was gray or black; there were huge unreal shadows and there was utter silence. The steps were wood; our feet clattered on them and along the verandah. It was wide, very wide, the rail broken. It was dark on the house side till we came by one room with a dim, unearthly light. It didn't illumine the porch but kept us from stumbling over two couches, set side by side. The fine wood frames were carved, but the silk brocade covers were torn, the stuffing oozing out. The slight motion of a figure took my vision inside the room. It had a high ceiling and along one long, tall wall there was a glass case; the ghostlike figure was opening one of the tall glass doors.

on a table that the tray was black. It had not been polished for a long time. She brought to each of us a plate of the finest porcelain with lime juice in crystal glasses. No two of the glasses were alike. The girl waited back in the shadows while we drank the juice. "Your granddaughter?" Tai said in a low voice. Mr. Despande inclined his head just a little and that was all. We didn't talk while we drank. As soon as we were through, the girl took our plates and glasses. She was hardly out of sight when Tai rose and said, "I will report your health good to Mrs. Gokhale."

Mr. Despande, as he shook my hand, held it a minute and said, "If I come to the United States, may I visit you? I have always thought that some day I would go."

Tai and I walked lightly as we went back down the porch. Both of us I knew wanted to keep from a sound that would break the spell, the charm Mr. Despande had laid on us. We crept down the steps, Tai holding my hand, and stole across the dark lower balcony. There was no figure visible in the room with its dim light, but I felt some one was watching us. I shivered and Tai's hand trembled in mine. The car was waiting out by the gate; the chauffeur had the door open, ready. The beam of the headlight caught Tai's face. Tears were running from her eyes.

Mathura

THE NEXT MORNING we were up early, rolling up our holdalls, putting on clothes for travel. We were to go to Mathura; our reservations were on *Genita*, an all third-class train. I was delighted that we had not been able to get first-class reservations for this day. I wanted to ride in every class but Tai didn't approve of anything but first class for me.

The bearer was obsequious at breakfast. Tai said, "Look at him today." When she gave him his remuneration, he made an oily grin although I knew that she had given him his exact due, not one anna more. As we left he said, "The sweeper will be outside your door." Tai did not reply. The flaunt of her sari showed her disapproval of his solicitation, but she walked directly through our rooms and outside. When she came back, she said, "Just as I thought. The bearer takes half that the sweeper gets, but he will never discover that I paid the sweeper double. It is always my habit to pay the sweepers more."

Mrs. Mahajan and her chauffeur had come. The

bearer was slow coming to load our luggage. "He is getting his share from the sweeper," Tai said, "but he will never discover the extra." Mrs. Mahajan and Tai chatted all the way to the junction and during the half hour that we waited for the train. Mrs. Mahajan had gifts for us and food for our journey. Tai received a blouse piece; my gift was two embroidered handkerchiefs. We had said our good-byes to Mr. Mahajan the evening before. His college duties kept him from seeing us off. This was gone over a number of times; a train journey was an event and due ceremony must be made.

The sun was burning hot as we stood on the platform; there was no roof to shade us, at this small junction. The train swept in with a roar and came to an abrupt jolting stop. The conductor and other train officials got off; Indians climbed out of the coaches; heads stuck out of the windows. Tai approached the conductor and he led us along the side of the train, looking at the name cards in their slots. Once our coach was found, the chauffeur got our luggage on and with last good-byes to Mrs. Mahajan, we followed our baggage in.

It was a long coach full of Indians. There were two toilets in the front end, then the doors opening on each side of the platform. There was a narrow aisle from front to back; on the left side there were the sections with the berths, four people in each section, and to the right a long row of wooden slatted single seats, like school desks one behind another. Tai was scornful as we walked down the aisle. "Look at this, Akka, this is *Genita*, a third-class train." It was all noise, smell, and confusion. Standing at the door, as we entered, there had been an enormous Sikh, more than six feet tall, with a bright pink turban. He was in shirt and shorts, a long sash of cloth folded around his middle many times with a dagger stuck in it. He had a strong, kind face, but my eyes were focused on his chin whiskers. It was the first time that I had a close view of this; they were rolled up neatly with a bit of cloth.

The sections seemed running over with people.

Two big fans above the bathrooms were roaring; voices were loud; there was a *strong* smell of food; there was litter and confusion. Our berths, one and two in section five, were a long green leather bench and a similar section to lower for the second berth at night. We were thrown into our seats as the train started.

Across from us in our section, the upper berth was let down. Underneath, crouching half-forward, was a very thin young Indian man, his face drawn, holding a book in his hand. He had on a white shirt and wide-legged white pajamas. Wool trousers were neatly folded at the end of the berth like a pillow. Squatting on the upper berth was an old man—white hair, dark brown skin—he sat motionless, looking out, with wide, unseeing eyes. He looked naked but he wore a scrap of white loincloth and about his neck he had a long fine hand-woven towel. Tai came back and settled herself and began to visit with the young man. He was a professor in a university with a Ph.D. in economics from the *University of London*. He was full of complaints about the conditions in India, but most of all about his wretched poor salary. Tai told him how well American teachers lived, but he did most of the talking. He began to cough, excused himself and lay down, his head on his trousers.

After a bit, Tai went to the section just back of us and visited. I could see that there was a man, his wife, and a boy of about eight. When Tai came back she told me that they were on their way to visit the woman's sister who was an undersecretary in the government. Tai didn't have to speak in a low voice, the train was so noisy that you could hardly hear when you sat close and yelled. I peeked back at the couple. The boy was quiet, looking out the window, eating. Over on the other side of the woman the man too was contentedly eating. She had hampers full in front of her. On two plates she was arranging food. In a minute, she got up and brought it to us. She had four gold bangles on each wrist and handsome big diamonds in her ears. She looked sweetly, shyly at me as I thanked

her. Tai talked about the food, but according to her custom did not say thank you. Mrs. Mahajan had sent lunch with us too so we were well provided.

Soon after, a young woman with a baby nine months old came back from one of the front sections and sat with us. The baby had a round little brown face, eyes dark with kohl. He had a round, brown bare little bottom too. The mother didn't speak English, but she and Tai visited in Hindi. Tai held the baby, crooning over it in her arms until it fell asleep. Tai sat there, relaxed with the sleeping child. I had to go to the bathroom. I dreaded the walk up the long lurching corridor and I found difficulty when I got there. The door was so heavy that I could not push it open. The train was swaying and there was no way that I could stand steady and push. "Madam," the Sikh had leaped to my aid, "allow me." He pushed the door open saying, "Do not use the lock. It is heavy too. I will stand guard." Inside was like an anatomical drawing. There was an enormous opening, draining down to an outlet. There were two far-apart foot holds for this floor toilet and overhead a dripping shower head. It was all shiny, slippery steel. I managed as best I could and, ready to go, fumbled with the door. It swung open in a gallant gesture almost toppling me over and precipitating me into the steel chasm. I kept my head up and walked out with as much distinction as I could manage, saying, "Thank you," to the tall Sikh in my best American voice.

Tai and I dozed a bit in the hot afternoon. The Ph.D. was sleeping, stretched out on his green leather berth. The holy man sat motionless, meditating. I opened my eyes when I heard voices. Tai was talking to the Sikh; he was sitting on one of the little wooden seats across the aisle, leaning forward, visiting with Tai in English. He was a merchant from Singapore, a Punjabi Sikh but born in Singapore. This was his first trip to the Punjab. He had many relatives to visit there. He told us that the holy man in the berth across from us was from the tip of India, on his way to a shrine

in the Himalayas. The holy man spoke a dialect no one on the train could understand; however most of the time he was meditating or praying. Yesterday there had been a man in the compartment who knew him and had told about him. This old holy man had considerable wealth; his wife was dead many years, his sons had sons grown, married and with children. He now devoted himself to religion. This journey was the lifelong dream of every Hindu—to make a pilgrimage to the high Himalayas. After he left the train he would walk in his bare feet forty miles on a trail up, higher and higher, to a grotto above the snow line. This was late in the season; the holy man would have to get in and out quickly for soon the snows would come, and the trail would be closed for the winter.

There were a good many train stops at stations, most of them large with crowds thronging to get on *Genita*. The Sikh would hurl himself up the aisle at the approach of a station, ascertain on which side the platform would be and place himself there, crying "Reserved" in a loud voice. Some of the men in front would slip past him to walk on the platform but he stood on guard, keeping out the many who tried to crowd in. Then he would come back with his interesting conversation.

As the afternoon wore on, the boy behind us began playing a quiet but endless game. He would sit on one wooden bench across the aisle, talk a little to himself, then move up to the next one. The baby fretted, and the mother brought it back to Tai. She took it and sent the mother back to rest. The men in front were having a lively time talking. The Ph.D. sat up and visited again. This time, the same as before, he started coughing after he talked—"the soot and dust of the train," he explained. When we ate, Tai shared our food with him. His sandals were so old and worn and I could see a ragged cuff on his folded trousers. The holy man opened a little brass lota. He drank water but I didn't see him eat.

At eight Tai said, "Let us make up our beds." The

young woman with the baby came back and said good-bye. They were getting off in the night. Across the aisle in our section, the Ph.D. and the holy man were already asleep. The holy man had covered himself with a Kashmir double shawl of the finest cream wool. The family back of us was asleep. In front, the men were talking, but even I went presently to sleep.

2

When my eyes opened in the morning, it was just daybreak, and the air was chill. I looked at my watch. It was four o'clock. The holy man sat up, folded his wool shawl, tucked his legs under him, his hands together, and prayed. Then he took out a twig and brushed and poked at his teeth. Tai had told me brushing the teeth with a twig is part of the morning religious ritual. I made no move or sound, but kept my eyes full on him. He lifted a small fine leather case, six by ten inches by two inches, opened it and took out pinches of white ash that he rubbed in his white hair and down on his forehead. Then he put down the case, took his posture—legs folded, hands together—and began again his prayer and meditation. Tai roused. We went to the bathroom, in turn. The Sikh jumped up and helped me with the door but Tai managed for herself. I said to her, "I am terrified that I may fall down the drain in that nightmare of a toilet."

"Akka," she said in her school teacher voice, "you wanted to ride every class. Now you have seen. After this we will go first class."

At seven, right on the minute, the holy man got down from his berth, opened his leather case again, took out a plastic holder with a good toothbrush sticking out of it. He took out a large-sized tube of Colgate's toothpaste and went to the bathroom, leaving his

folded shawl and leather case on the green leather berth. Tai had our holdalls strapped, our baggage ready, and it was *still two hours before we would reach Mathura*. She was speaking very British. "Your note to Krishna is safe in your sari," I said.

"Yes, Akka, but you know the last hours I pray again to see my dear ones. It is four years since I have seen Madhu and his family; the two youngest children I have never seen." I took tight hold of her hand.

The holy man came back down the aisle. His hair was wet, streaked with ashes; he had used the shower. He took his leather case and shawl and moved to the small wooden seat across from us. He had a large, muscular frame, but in that small space he folded his legs, took his shawl and wrapped it around his shoulders, covering himself. He *froze into meditation again*.

"Tai, he has only the towel, the shawl, and the small loincloth and he's barefooted. How will he endure in the mountains?"

"He will feel neither hunger, nor thirst nor cold; he will be exalted."

Tai moved over to one of the wooden seats, her eyes searching for the first glimpse of Mathura. Suddenly she jumped up.

"The cantonment. We are passing the cantonment. We are in Mathura"

"Tai, Tai." She didn't hear me. I too was tense. Tai had said so many times, "I pray only to see my children once more." She ran up to the front of the coach, I after her. The Sikh was standing in the door; he had the upper half open and moved over for her. She leaned far out, I hanging on to her. The platform was in view, crowded with people. She tried to reach the bolts on the lower half of the door. Our Sikh friend pulled the bolts up but held the door firmly shut. The train ground, jolted, stopped. Tai was off like a bird. As I stood in the doorway watching her flight, she stopped in the circle made by a tall Indian man, a child in his arms, a handsome Indian woman, a smaller child in her

arms, and two boys and a girl. The crowd was streaming into the train; the Sikh was calling "Reserved! Reserved!" I was quivering with excitement.

Two red-turbaned porters started to push into our compartment. I stepped out on the platform, the Sikh beside me. Tai was running back to me, the boys running with her. The porters were getting our luggage out on the platform. Madhu, the son, and Madhurani, the daughter-in-law, were in front of me. They put the children down and made deep namastes to me, their faces glowing. "You have brought our mother safe home," Madhu said. Tai had darted into the coach to see that no luggage was left behind; I was counting the pieces. The starting gong on the platform banged, the Sikh stepped back in the coach doorway calling, "Good-bye." We were in Mathura.

Words were fast in our little group. The porters were getting the big bags up on their heads, carryalls on top of them, their arms hanging full of parcels. The platform was still crowded. Some of the women were wearing saris of bright colors but many had on grimy white ones; most of the men wore dhotis or loincloths, and there was a group of Marwadi women, full red skirts billowing around their ankles heavy with silver bracelets.

We were walking along beside the large brick station building, a row of cannas in large metal drums beside it, going through the turnstiles, through the big station room crowded with people. Tai and Madhu were walking together, Madhu carrying his youngest son. They were talking hard and fast, following the porters. Madhurani, carrying the baby girl, the older girl, Satish, hanging to her sari, walked with me. We were slower. Madhurani was smiling but silent, I was chattering. Down steep steps there was a station wagon drawn close waiting for us, an old turbaned man was the driver. Madhu turned to me with pride. "The manager gave me the factory station wagon to meet you." The porters began loading our things in, Madhu and Tai directing. Along one wall of the station courtyard were drawn up

walled area. To one side, there were small vegetable beds beside the road and a rambling scattering of low buildings; to the other side a trim white stucco building with several older, dingy-looking structures lying beyond it. The station wagon had stopped in front of the white building. "You are to have the use of the guest house," Madhu said; then proudly, "It is air-conditioned." As I stood there, I was steamy hot and sweating. Unloading began. I was keyed up with confusion and excitement; Tai was beside herself with the joy of seeing her children. We entered a lounge room furnished with a round table covered by a dirty cloth, expensive matching chairs, a telephone, and two large framed religious pictures hanging on the wall. The floor was tile in lime-colored blocks; there was a closed door at one side. "The manager's bedroom; he sleeps here sometimes," Madhu explained. "The next door is the bathroom you are to use." It stood open; I could see gleaming white tile and porcelain fixtures. He opened a door straight ahead and we walked out onto a wide L-shaped verandah. Bamboo curtains with black cotton linings fell to the floor on one side of the L. Drawn up to it were a dining table with stains of curry and dahl on the cloth, and half a dozen chairs. On the other side of the balcony L in a line with the front bedroom and bath, there was a door. Madhu opened this. Cold air rushed out at us. We walked into our bedroom.

"Lie down and rest until we eat, Akka," Tai said.

"The servant will bring in the luggage," Madhu added, and he and Tai left.

I was in a good sized room with a tile floor, white walls, shutters at the two windows—the air-conditioning unit in one of them, and what I was already calling "Western drapes." Two shiny modern wooden beds, a wardrobe, the door standing open, a dressing table, with small drawers to the floor, a bench in front of it, completed the furnishings. I took off my jacket, pulled back the spread and lay down. It was shivery cold. After a few minutes of discomfort, I got up, said to myself, "I didn't

come to India to freeze, lying in an air-conditioned room." I put my jacket on, opened the door quietly and slipped out on to the balcony. No one was in sight but there was a low, almost sobbing sound. The black cloth-lined bamboo curtains were lifting, blowing in the breeze, but not enough to let me see under them. However there was an opening between two of the bamboo curtains, so I walked softly up, hiding myself back of the bamboo and looked out.

Down two steps, there was a cement courtyard. I looked up to see the sun, brilliant in a cloudless sky. The guest house threw a bit of shade, and in it on the cement floor four women were crouched, one foot under, one knee up, sitting bent over, their saris over their heads. They were talking, their low voices making the childlike, almost sobbing sound I had heard. One had a deep magenta sari, one a sari with a border in a green leaf pattern, another had white with an all-over pattern of green. One woman, who was withered black, wore a sari of faded green; she had four gold bangles, quite heavy, two on each arm. I looked at the others' arms; one had a single gold bangle on each arm with many glass bangles. The third woman had such thin gold bangles you could scarcely pick them out among the many colored glass ones. The fourth woman had a four-inch band of blue glass on each arm and a gold plug in her nose. I could see two heavy silver anklets where her knee pulled her sari away.

The women had scoops, like dustpans, but fine-woven of rattan; they were shaking, tossing seeds, picking out bits of waste. Back of them were enormous bags full of seed; in front of them a canvas sheet with a good sized pile already cleaned. They shook and tossed in the low, slow rhythm of their voices. A black mynah bird was stalking up. He seized a seed and flew out over the courtyard wall. My eyes followed him; there was a rusty crow sitting on the wall.

I stood watching, jumping when the door opened and Madhu came through and walked across the balcony to me.

"What are they cleaning?" I asked. The women did not look nor move nor interrupt the rhythm of shaking the scoops despite the strange sound of my voice.

"Today they are working on cumin seeds. Tomorrow they will work with chilies, coriander, and turmeric. They work here in the courtyard all the time preparing the many seeds and herbs we use in our canning. Come, Aunti, we are ready to eat."

We went out through the main room of the guest house to the stone paved road and walked along slowly, Madhu telling me about the factory. The vegetable beds beside us were experimental plots where they tested new seeds. The older low buildings on beyond the guest house were the offices. They were crudely built with open fronts. I could see tables, desks, and men.

"The two large buildings beyond the seed beds are where the canning is done. I have my small chemistry laboratory there," Madhu said and went on explaining that in addition to being food chemist he was one of the two production managers. The factory employed fifty men and seventy women for the canning operation; then there were a bookkeeper and a treasurer in the office and many clerks. The help in the shipping department was variable; sometimes the tins were stored until there was a big accumulation before they were shipped, and, of course, there were *chaukidars* (watchmen) and coolies.

The road turned now and we were in front of a good-sized open shed. An army truck was drawn up to it and coolies were loading cardboard cartons, each stenciled in big letters "*Mathura Fruit and Vegetable Products, Mathura, India.*" We stood a moment watching. Madhu went on.

"Most of our work is done under army contract. Canning is new to India. It is hard to get people used to eating food from tins. But we have so much waste of fruit and vegetables in season that it will be a big help to India's economy once canning gets established. As canning goes in India, this is quite a large and prosperous operation. The owner started in 1942 with a capital

of 16 rupees and this piece of ground. There was not even a hut on it. But, Oh, Aunti, he is a hard man to work for. He squeezes you every way."

We walked on, the road turning again beside the loading shed. Now the road was close between storage sheds, an open sewage gutter at one side of it.

"Aunti," Madhu said, "this is not a good place for my children to live. I don't know why the owner didn't plan the quarters better."

Another turn, and we walked close between two walls. The first door we passed, Madhu said, was the block occupied by the other production manager. They were the only two employees who had quarters in the compound. They received these quarters in addition to their salaries, large by Indian standards. The second door Madhu opened, and we entered a tiny courtyard, brick paved, a latrine in one corner. There was a handkerchief of blue sky above; the open space wasn't twelve feet square. A narrow open porch was in front of us, level with the courtyard; an enclosure at one end was the kitchen. On the other open end was a narrow table with four chairs. Madhu led me on through the door in the center of the porch, into a room so dark I couldn't see for a minute, and where a big electric fan was whining so loudly that I could hardly hear.

Then Tai's voice said, "Akka, see me, in the midst of my children." There was Tai on a mat on the floor, Prabhavati, the baby girl, in her arms; Surat the two-and-a-half-year-old boy sitting close in the folds of her sari; Satish, the girl of four; Kiran, the boy of six; and Prakash, the eldest, seven, squatting, looking at her. The older three children got up and made a solemn namaste to me. Tai rose, Prabhavati in her arms, Surat clinging to her.

"Oh, Akka, how shocked you must be to see how we live."

The large rectangular room had a cracked cement floor. My eyes followed the plaster—dingy, not freshly white-washed—up to where just under the high ceiling there was a row of four small windows, the only light

and air in the room. The shorter walls at the side of the room were lined with cupboards.

Madhu said, "Aunti, I kept at the owner until he had the cupboards made. We could not live without storage. He promises white-wash, the floor mended, but nothing is done."

The only furnishings were two single charpoys neat with handwoven covers and a big double charpoy turned up against the wall, its rope pattern making it almost like a wall hanging. Madhurani came in, the black tendrils of her hair curling a bit about her warm and tender face.

"Come, Aunti, eat."

The children went out with us, but only we elders ate. Tai, Madhu, and I were seated at the table, the cloth spotless—Madhurani served us. A narrow stairway ran up one side of the courtyard to an upper courtyard. The steps were steep. Prakash went up first, then Kiran helped Surat up them and Satish followed. Prabhavati, the baby, sat on the floor just inside the kitchen, her back to us. She would look half around, then at my slightest motion turn away. Tai and I filled ourselves with Madhurani's good food.

Tai and Madhu began to talk but first she said, "Come, Madhurani, bring your food and eat here with us." Madhurani came with her stainless steel thal heaped quite full. We too had been served on stainless steel, Tai explaining again that young people in India were using it. They had some silver of course, but it was stored away in trunks. The children kept creeping down on the narrow stair, looking at us but saying nothing. Tai said, "The children want you to come up on the roof and see the Jumna River. Oh, Akka, shall I pull or push you up these steep steps!"

Tai was laughing as she went in front, giving me a big tug on each step. The little roof terrace was smaller than the courtyard, with a wall that Surat couldn't see over, but the two older boys were leaning on and over it, pointing. Prakash turned, his dark eyes flashing at me and said, "See, Aunti, Jumna."

There, in the flat land, was the Jumna River, curving close to us, wide and quiet looking, but yellow, deep. We looked awhile, then Tai sent me off with Madhu. I walked back to the guest house with him, he going over to check in the canning factory. Later when the sun was down, he was going to take all of us out for a ride in the station wagon. This time, the cold in the bedroom was welcome.

Tai wakened me; the room was dark and when I asked if it was the middle of the night, Tai laughed.

"No, but you have slept soundly. It is evening and Madhu is here with the station wagon for us."

Outside, Madhurani and the children stood waiting. They were close to her, quiet. Madhurani said, "Aunti, you are already giving us a treat. The children love to ride in an automobile and seldom have the opportunity."

We had to wait at the gate for the chaukidar to come. He fumbled with the key tied to the corner of his dhoti. Up the steep little rise of ground, we were out on the main road, the only vehicle in sight. We passed the neighboring group of factory buildings close to the road. There were a few trees close too, but beyond was barren ground with hummocks, a few low hills and sparse, scrubby growth. We were going to Lord Krishna's birthplace, but this seemed biblical country. We passed the bit of bazaar where in the half-light I could see huddled figures in the stalls, spots of fire from their cooking pots lighting up their faces.

The car turned away from the main road, onto a side road skirting Mathura. On both sides of the road there were small ruined temples, bricks tumbling out, gaping holes. In between there was stubbly growth, and once in a while a spreading tree. One more turn of the road and the car stopped. All of us got out; the children had made no sounds. Head high before us was a large plateau of earth. It was supported by a partly exposed wall of crumbling bricks and stones. Madhu and the boys were already climbing up broken stone steps. Madhurani with Prabhavati in her arms, Satish cling-

ing to her sari, Tai and I followed. Over at the far end, there was a small mosque. The sky, gray blue, was low, close over our heads. Around us was a flat plain, the Jumna River in turns and loops, writhing through it like a snake. There were no clouds, no fog, no blowing dust, but the air was thick, heavy with years. Madhu, Madhurani, and their children close in a group were walking slowly along. Madhurani had the *palu* of her sari over her head and so did Tai. Their figures were shadowy in the dark. Tai took me by the hand and spoke in a low voice. There was no other sound.

"Akka, this is Krishna's birthplace. You remember, I told you about it. There was a pronouncement that the King would be killed by a child born of his loved queen. Six times her newborn babes were snatched from her and killed, but this seventh time, there were more signs, more omens. The king was so fearful he had the queen confined in the prison. His advisors counseled her death, but the King could not endure ordering her death. She was spied upon at every hour, but at the moment of birth, Krishna's birth, a loyal maidservant substituted her own child. The King entered the chamber at the first cry of the child and himself seized it. Holding it high, he dashed it to the stone floor before the queen's eyes. But already the real son of the King, the baby Krishna, was in the arms of a trusted servant, outside the walls of the prison. The River Jumna was in flood, spreading all over the plain. The plan had been for the servant to carry baby Lord Krishna across the river, so the servant waded out into the stream. The waters were pouring down raising the river higher and higher. The servant held the babe out of the water. He was a tall man; higher and higher he held the child, the waters rising and rising. He could raise the child no higher; being swept away by the flood seemed a certainty. The water came up and up, as if it was searching for the baby Krishna. The water touched Krishna's foot. The turbulence ceased; the waters fell away. Baby Lord Krishna was carried across the Jumna in safety to the

trusted, waiting hands on the other side. Behind him the river rose again and roared in black turbulence."

Tai's nails were cutting into my hand; my hand was rigid. We moved over where there was a bit of wall.

Tai said in a low voice, "See, Akka, the arches of the windows, intact after the hundreds of years."

We stood close together, on the edge of the hard dirt-packed platform, silent before the Jumna. At last we moved to join the family. They were at the far end, looking at the mosque.

Tai burst out loudly, "In the sixteenth century, the Moslems defiled this holy ground with their mosque. A Hindu temple was built on the ground over the prison, but the Moslems tore it down, stone by stone, and put up this mosque. At the Partition, the government had it padlocked, but not yet have the Hindus been given permission to rid this place of it and restore the temple of Krishna." Tai seemed tall when her eyes flashed such sparks of fire. Prakash, the eldest of the children, was standing beside her, seeming tall too, his eyes flashing like hers.

Silently, in the dark, we climbed down the crumbling stone steps and got into the car. Shadows made our ride still darker, but it was only a short distance till the car stopped again. There were dim lights here, a few stalls with merchants squatting in them, and, on the ground, woven trays with flowers—roses and many marigolds. Tai bought some roses and gave Madhurani part of them. Before us there was a wall and an entrance gate. Beside it a beggar squatted, lifting sightless eyes and holding out his brown hand. Tai fell back from us, opening her moneybag again, saying, "Akka, I give only to the blind."

Inside all was white marble, bright lights making it gleam against the darkness of the night. The wall around head-high was marble. We were standing on a wide marble platform surrounding the white marble temple, not a large temple but glistening white in the bright electric light. Tai and Madhurani moved ahead,

going. I promised you a massage. In the morning, I will have the old woman come to you."

I was still sound asleep when the sound of the door opening roused me. It was daylight and Madhurani was coming in with a tray, on it a teapot, two cups and two plates. Tai in a fresh sari was sitting on her bed, her legs folded under, smiling. The air conditioning was turned off, the shutters were open. Madhurani put the tray on the dressing table. I sat up and Madhurani handed me a plate with a cup of tea.

"How are you this morning, Aunti? Rested? How good you are to come to India and bring our mother home to us."

Madhurani went back to the children at once, but Tai waited while I dressed. Today she would spend with her family; I would rest and write letters. Tomorrow, we were to go on to Delhi. We must get on to Kashmir. We went over our plans; there the hotels would be closing by October 15, and it was now September twenty-seventh. It was hard to leave Mathura, almost on arrival, but from Kashmir we would come directly back to Mathura for the whole month of Diwali, the festival of lights. Mukund and his family would come up from Nagpur and join us.

I walked out on the verandah with Tai; she was going over to Madhurani's now. It was early and the women had not yet come to work. One of the bamboo curtains had not been let down so we had a full view into the back courtyard. Beyond the cement courtyard there was a bricked area about twenty by thirty feet. Tethered to iron stakes, at intervals, there were fourteen cows. Most of the cows were white, but two were black; four of them were young. Each of the cows had a wooden box of hay in front of it. Their heads were down munching; their ribs stuck out, and their udders were so small I couldn't see their teats, but squatted by one of the cows was an Indian man. His hands up under her were bringing down into a pail thin little squirts of milk.

"Akka, remember, I told you when children are

sickly, we try to get milk from a black cow. It's an old superstition, but I really think that there is a difference in the vitamin content. At any rate in the south of India, where they get the most vitamins from the sun, the cows are all white; here in the midsection, you will find a few black cows. When we get to Kashmir where they have the least sun, all the cows will be black."

The ground outside the bricked area was brown and bare, but there were rose bushes, dusty and straggling, climbing up the wall. The sun was brilliant in a bright blue cloudless sky.

"As soon as the milking is done," Tai said, "the cows will be taken to pasture."

I had just taken out my letter pad when in came the gardener, not knocking for entrance. He had a bunch of marigolds and orange cosmos, and he put them in the enameled brass vases that were on the dressing table. It was not an artful arrangement nor an artful choice of flowers, but it was pleasing. He bore himself, in silent dignity, but he banged the door. Bearers seemed to be moving all about silently except for the banging of doors which was as constant as drum beats. The room boy, with rosettes of gold in his ears, came and made our beds.

As I started to write my letters, back came Tai, a small black old woman following her, her gray hair in a tight little knot, but straggles of it around her dark withered face. Her brown hands were like claws and her sari gaily. Tai was laughing, and the woman smiling too, showing a few snags of teeth. She had a little tin in her hand.

"The old woman is going to give you the massage I promised you could have every day in India. Here, let me unzip you."

In moments, I was on my bed stripped, lying on a sheet, covered with another. I had snatched up a bath towel as I resented having all my clothes off, but Tai said sharply, "Akka, the old woman cannot massage you through your clothes. She can manage her hands under a sari but your slip is too close to you. I will leave you to her now."

I was face down on the bed, every joint and muscle in my body crying out for relief. I felt cold strong hands seize my neck; I let out a cry, useless in that room with its eight inch walls. My body was tense with the pain of her grip. Just as I thought my end had come, there was a cold dash on my back. I raised myself; she was shaking oil on me from the tin but there was a wild light in her eyes. In an instant, her hands descended, this time on my shoulders. I screamed again. In desperation I called from the depths of memory the word "asta." That was what Tai had screamed at the driver of the buffalo cart when he had thrown us about so badly.

"Asta! Asta!" I hellowed, getting my head up, my knees drawn up in sudden motion. I sat up. The old woman looked furiously at me, talking violently. I sat there, on the edge of the bed, shaking my head just as violently. She grabbed up the top sheet that had fallen on the floor, flung it over my shoulders, and went to the door, her hand held back to me in a sign to follow.

I was too dazed to refuse. I clutched the sheet about my shoulders with one hand, the bath towel still to my middle with the other hand, and followed the old fury into the bathroom. The tub was full to the top with water. She snatched the sheet and pushed, and I stepped into water, icy cold. The bath towel still at my middle, I held it there; it was a little comfort. My body was greasy as a channel swimmer's, but still the water was shockingly cold. My teeth were trying to chatter, but I kept them apart, afraid if they hit and I chipped them that I would be in for Indian dentistry. With horror, I saw that the old woman was furling her sari high. She plunged one of her brown old legs into the tub, her other leg giving her anchor. She was black and I was white with fury in that icy water. Her hands began to rub and belabor me, no wash cloth to soften their blows. Water was splashing and running over the top of the tub. The old woman was yelling at me and my screaming was louder.

All at once, Tai came into the bathroom and burst into laughter. I began to cry.

"Tai, she is killing me."

Still laughing, Tai drove the old woman away mumbling. She had me out of the tub, wiped dry and back in the bedroom in minutes.

"Akka, I didn't dream she would be so rough. I will never leave you alone for anything like that again." But she was still laughing.

Tai and I walked together over to Madhurani's. The factory compound was in its pattern of activity. There was a hum, mostly of voices from the canning section. There were few machines and many people. Beside us, the men in the office part of the factory were buzzing away. Here there was more conversation than work. Servants were coming and going. A truck was chugging out from the loading shed. I clutched Tai's arm and pointed up. High on the roof there was a large monkey. Tai refused to be interested.

"They are just a nuisance here," she said, then she spoke what was close to her heart. "Oh, Akka, how can I stand it to have my grandchildren live in such quarters. There is no place for them to play in the sun. They can't come out here in the compound with the workers."

As we went into the court, my heart was with Tai. This was such a tight, dark place, just the scrap of sky overhead and the tiny bit of escape to the scrap of roof. Madhurani was calm and smiling, ready with our dinner. As we waited a minute for Madhu to come, the children began to climb; they wanted to demonstrate their prowess. Up the cupboards, the two older boys went; from the top it was a scramble up to the windows. The boys were triumphant. Satish had stopped at the cupboard top; Surat was standing below watching. He was a fat little boy; his figure was that of a portly old man in miniature, but topped with a child's dark curls and merry lace. Madhu came saying that the owner of the factory would come shortly from his home in Mathura to the guest house. The management was to have a conference on potatoes and it would be a chance for me to meet the owner. As soon as we were through eating, Madhu and I walked back to the guest house. A shiny new Ford stood in front of the door.

lands hung over the edge of the frame. At the sound of a door, I turned. The manager was just coming out of his bedroom. "Can't you sit down, Mrs. Armstrong? I will have the bearer bring lemonade."

I sat down in one of the cane chairs. He clapped his hands for the bearer. I told him how comfortable we were in the guest house and I spoke of the air conditioning. He said yes, it was the thing in India, but had I noticed on the outside of the building that one wall of his bedroom was of Kus-Kus with water running down through it, a tatty, the old Indian way of cooling rooms. Then I talked about the factory, saying that food preservation could improve India's food supplies so much. He liked my talk, but was already so puffed with self-esteem that he couldn't swell any more. I listened to conversation about his factory, his astute entry into the canning field, his son in college, on and on; then his car, his Ford. He asked when we were leaving, and when I said tomorrow we would go to Delhi on our way to Kashmir, he at once said, moving his body with an *important twist, and making a quick jerk of his head to the side*, "I am going to Delhi in the morning on business. You and Mrs. Sathe can go up with me. It is a pleasant ride by car and a hard trip by train." I thanked him and said that we would be delighted. He got up, puffing up a little more with his offer of the ride, and said that he must take care of business in the office.

3

I opened my eyes in the morning to see Tai, dressed for travel, sitting at the dressing table, writing the usual travel chit to Lord Krishna.

"Ask Krishna for special care for us with that owner," I said. Tai's eyes snapped.

"I don't even like to ride with him," she said. "Oh. Alla, that Madhu has to work for such a man and live

in such a place. Get on with your dressing. Madhurani will bring tea and a bun; we are to make an early start."

We decided to take two suitcases and the black leather duffle bag to Kashmir. Madhu had already assured us that our other bags, locked, could be stored safely in the guest house. Tai and I were sitting, waiting in the main room, when the Ford drove up, Tai flouncing her sari about because she was waiting. Our bags were outside, ready.

The owner, puffed this morning with giving us the ride, came into the room. His glance took in Tai's dark silk sari and my Italian silk suit. Outside the driver, thin, bearded, in a yellow turban, was standing impassive at the door of the car. Inside, on the back seat, was a young woman, a little girl beside her. The owner said, "Mrs. Armstrong, Mrs. Sathe, this is Mrs. Jatar. She is taking some things to her mother in Delhi. Her husband is the sub-manager at the bank."

I could hear the bearer shifting baggage in the trunk. As we got in, I heard the lock snap. There had been room. Mrs. Jatar took the little girl in her pale pink organdy frock up on the soft cloud of her sky blue chiffon sari. The child did not speak nor move during the journey. Tai sat in the center, I on the outside. The owner was looking back saying, "There is ample room in the seat."

Madhu was coming toward the car on the path between the vegetable beds, and Madhurani had come up the road with the children. Madhurani had the same ability to time her actions as did Tai. They were just in time to wish us a pleasant trip to Kashmir and wave good-bye.

Delhi

THE IMPERIAL HOTEL just off Connaught Circus was the big, old name hotel in New Delhi, the best before the government built the air-conditioned Asoka, so our turbaned, bearded driver and Mr. Shaha knew its location without hunting about. The Imperial was back from Queen's Highway, behind an ornamental iron fence with a lawn landscaped with tall old trees and shrubs. There was an oval entrance at the side, the center planted and tended like a garden.

As we turned in and the Oriental luxury was evident, Mr. Shaha turned and said, "We can find you comfortable lodgings at less cost"

Bluntly in American fashion, I said, "At the Imperial, the rates are seventy-five to ninety-five rupees for two per day. In American dollars, that figures the best room at ten dollars per day for each of us, for room and meals. To Americans that is reasonable" Tai pinched me. I didn't know whether she was delighted that I had put the factory owner down or whether she wanted to say, "Don't be so commercial, Akka," but I was pleased to see his head droop a little.

Our car had barely halted when down the steps of the open lobby came the chief doorman, a gray-bearded, six-foot Indian with a crisp white turban, the ends smartly aloft like weather vanes. His tunic and trousers were white starched cotton, these set off by a bib of deep red wool decorated with a shield of the hotel initials, trimmed with gold braid and cinched in at the waist with a wide gold braid belt. Polished, black heavy leather British shoes completed his uniform. He opened the car door. With a brief goodbye and thank you—the thank you just from me, Tai adhering to her manner of not acknowledging favors in that way, Tai and I got out and walked up the shallow steps wide as the lobby, and carpeted in red as was the lobby. We stopped at the desk, met with pleasant smiles by the clerk, and registered. Up in the elevator, down a wide corridor, we found our luggage waiting in a pleasant large room, an old-fashioned ceiling fan over each bed, a great deal of chintz in curtains, slipcovers and spreads, and a big wardrobe. A dressing room had a dressing table and a long closet in which to hang dresses. The bathroom had a few of the white tiles broken, and water was dripping from the faucets, making a yellow stain, but all of it was clean and comfortable.

We shook the dust of the old road from our silks, washed our faces, and went down for lunch. Two boys, about twelve, in small replicas of the doorman's uniform, stood at the dining room doors, beaming as they opened them for us. Inside, there was air conditioning, and dozens of clean white tables. The headwaiter seated us, indicating that lunch was a buffet. A circular table was spread in the center of the room, decorated with high bouquets and loaded down with western food. I heaped my plate high, mostly with meat—roast beef, corned beef, ham—Tai urging me on saying, "Akka, eat while you can."

Later that day I bought the *Times of India* and read several items complaining about beef being served in city hotels and urging that it be forbidden. But I joyously ate that first meal and many more of excellently prepared meat at the Imperial.

The dining room was comfortably filled with a cosmopolitan group—Americans, British, Europeans, some Indians: their lovely wives in delicate saris. There was just one Oriental, a young Japanese man, sitting several tables away from us. It was familiar and comfortable for me to be sitting in Western chairs, eating Western food. Tai enjoyed this easy life too.

Our first stop for the afternoon was to be at the American Embassy. The Imperial doorman walked down the carpeted steps with us, blew a shrill whistle twice. He had asked Tai if we wanted a large or a small taxi. Cars were in a stand just at the entrance of the grounds. The taxi had a large driver with turban and beard. We drove rapidly through streets filled with cars, trucks, rickshaws, bicycles, cows, goats and buffalo carts to Feraze Road. At the Embassy, we picked up my mail. Back in the car Tai leaned forward and said to the driver, "Hamilton House, Connaught Circus." We were on our way to try our luck at the American Express.

The New Delhi streets were wide and tree lined. As we came back into the center of the city, traffic increased, and for blocks at a time there were stalls on the sidewalks, small huts back of them made of bits and pieces of wood, cardboard, cloth—just anything.

"Refugees from Pakistan," Tai said.

"But the partition was ten years ago and they are still on the sidewalks?"

"The government has spent lacs [one hundred thousand] of rupees relocating them. So many of the Punjabis were merchants. It is hard to force them out of the cities. They get a toe hold with a tiny shop and they don't want to move to the suburbs or the country. We have millions of our own in need. These people are so aggressive. They crowd their way in and somehow build little businesses."

Tai resented the refugees from Pakistan. She felt the government favored them, and she felt the refugees had tightened the pinch on young Indians like her sons.

We had turned into the street that was Connaught Circus. It circled around a park—the hub of the wheel

—with grass, trees, and benches in it. Most of the shops that lined the edge were small but some were pretentious. All of them had doors and windows. There were awnings and built-out roofs over the sidewalk, and I could see that inside there were counters, shelves, display windows. Connaught Circus was a regular shopping center, not a bazaar.

Our turbaned driver pulled up the car to the curb saying, "Hamilton House."

He opened the door, we climbed out on the wide sidewalk in front of Hamilton House. There were long glass windows full of travel posters, and inside I could see a wide counter in the center with flanks of desks in low-walled cubicles at each side. The room had the American look, much varnished wood, no ornaments, no litter, just advertising, but behind the counter and seated at most of the desks were Indians, trimly dressed, alert. There were a number of women, some Oriental, some European. I guessed that among this personnel every language in the world was understood and spoken.

The coolness of air-conditioning met us, but even before we reached the center desk, we felt a warmth of welcome. A slender, rather tall young Indian looked directly at me, his eyes bright with intelligence.

"Please, Madam, what can we do for you?"

"I would like to speak to the manager," I said.

"This way. Will you sit here, please?"

The Indian had led us to the far side of the room. Several comfortable chairs with cushioned seats and backs were in a group in front of an office space shut off with opaque glass. He knocked at the door, went in and at once a young American came out smiling. I introduced myself and Tai. He asked us to come into his office.

Robert Wood was a tall, bronzed man, young, competent. He read my letter of credit, looked up at me with the kindly warmth we expect from Americans. "Yes, I can take care of you. Do you want some money today?"

I said, "Yes," but I wondered how I would manage

when I was away from Delhi. He instructed me to mail my personal check, registered mail, care of Robert Wood, American Express, and he would send the money in rupees to the State Bank of India wherever I was. By taking the money direct in Indian currency, I would not lose by double exchange. My face and Tai's were alight. Promptly and directly my affairs had been arranged and with genuine personal courtesy.

"Come out to the central desk. I will get the money for you." There he had me write the check, then he introduced us to the young Indian we had first approached, saying, "This is my first assistant. He will give you the money in rupees and always help you in any way if you come and I happen not to be here."

I asked about our tickets to Kashmir. We would like them for tomorrow evening. The young Indian said, "Let me make a telephone call."

Robert Wood stood chatting with us. This friendliness, although it was in the line of business, made me feel secure. The young Indian was back, smiling.

"I have a coupe for you from Old Delhi to Pathankot, 7:30 tomorrow evening. I will have to send for the tickets. Could you pick them up tomorrow?"

"Yes," we said, thanked him and thanked Robert Wood. He walked to the door with us. People had been standing all along the counter; someone was talking at almost every desk over various travel problems; people were coming and going. As we went out, I looked back at his steady face and said, "Thank you. You have made me feel very secure."

Our taxi took a main wide road out of Connaught Circus. It was just a few blocks to the Imperial but bicycles by the dozens choked the traffic. This time as we came to the hotel I noticed along the front wide walk goods spread for sale and several women in Tibetan costume walking around among the brass and bronze pieces.

Before I could speak, Tai said, "Wait, Akka, don't be so eager to buy." We turned into the side entrance and the resplendent doorman opened our taxi door.

and ushered us into the lobby again. This time I noticed the potted plants next to the wall, up the steps, and into the lobby; over them were hand-blocked wall hangings, reds and yellows to go with the color of the carpet.

Tai and I agreed that we would eat dinner promptly, then make our call on Mrs. Kamlabai. In our room, we put on fresh silks and quickly returned to the lobby. I gave the young boys in uniform who opened the dining-room doors a few coins. Tai said, "You spoil the servants," but she was smiling. The boys had a winning way; they flattered you as they bowed low, pulling open the doors.

The headwaiter seated us as if we were old friends. I ordered American food. Tai was pleased with an Indian dinner, and she was proud to have me comfortable, well fed. Next to us, alone at a table, was the young Japanese man; he looked lonely. He kept his head down, eating but looking about sometimes from the sides of his eyes.

When we were through, we went out and had a taxi called. Tai had been able to get Mrs. Kamlabai on the phone, so she was expecting us. Mrs. Kamlabai was the Directress of Lady Irwin College, the largest home economics institution in India. Just six months before, she had been a guest in my home during her Ford-sponsored tour of land-grant colleges. Tai had been her student at Lady Irwin and was her close friend. In my home we had cooked Indian food for her, helped her wash and iron saris, taken her on her enthusiastic first visit to a supermarket. Mrs. Kamlabai was a tall woman with a large, well-rounded frame, a large, full, strongly modeled face. She was dark brown—South Indian—Tai told me. Her hair was black streaked with gray, smoothed into a tight bun with just a softening fluff of white about her pleasant face. She was a child widow, but surrounded now by nieces and nephews of college age. She was a hard but competent administrator, and lived in a comfortable bungalow on the campus.

It was dusk; there was little traffic along the residen-

tial streets. When we came to Feraze Road, I recognized the American Embassy. There were a few lights. Tai was calling my attention to the brick wall enclosing Lady Irwin College, on the other side of the street.

"We will have to find a gate open," Tai said, "All will be closed at night except one with a guard."

The center gate was open. Tai said, "Mrs. Kamlabai," to the chaukidar, he promptly opened it, and we drove into the tree shaded campus. There were a number of substantial two- and three-story brick buildings. Following the driveway, with Tai's directions, we wound around and found a neat brown hungalow with a light on outside for us. A servant came, opened the car door. We were just at the steps when Mrs. Kamlabai came out with a hearty welcome. Before we went in, she had Tai send the taxi away, saying that her driver would take us back to the hotel. The porch was filled with potted plants; inside there was a hallway opening into a dining room on one side, and on the other side a living room, which we entered. It was comfortably furnished: rugs, curtains, pictures on the walls, tables, lamps, upholstered chairs. The ornaments were Indian, wood carving from Kashmir, enameled brass from Benares. The room looked used but not worn. Mrs. Kamlabai was like the room, not elegant but very substantial.

Tea was served at once. She did not ask if we wished it, she commanded. She had an eager, direct interest in both Tai and me. The university in my home town, and our trip to Kashmir all were discussed. In turn we heard about her family, and members of the faculty who were friends of Tai's; it was then that Mrs. Kamlabai said, "Tai, I know of a post that I think will be interesting for you. The Ford Foundation is looking for an Indian advisor for a home economics school they are opening in Nepal. You are just what they want: a mature, sympathetic woman with executive experience to get their institute going. They will pay well. Dr. Sloan, head of the Ford Foundation in India, is away just now, but when you come back through Delhi, after your Kashmir trip, go in and talk it over with him."

Tai at once said that she was interested, mentioned that she had been approached concerning a research post in Bangalore. Then since the conversation had turned to business affairs, she asked Mrs. Kamlabai what she thought of her (Tai's) heading the cultural program at the Military School Encampment at Nassig. Tai wound around the *crux* of the matter, not saying that she did not want to go if there were political implications but nevertheless making that point clear. Mrs. Kamlabai, direct as she had seemed to me, wound around the question too. After considerable conversation Mrs. Kamlabai said, "The Chavans are in Delhi; let me give them a ring. They will know."

Mrs. Kamlabai came back from the phone, her smooth, large face in a smile, and said, "Mrs. Chavan is at home, Mr. Chavan will *not* be in till late. I intimated that you had a question. She is eager to welcome you home and to meet Mrs. Armstrong. I can send you over in my car."

Tai at once got up and we left, Mrs. Kamlabai following us out to the driveway where her car and driver were waiting.

As we drove out through the shadowy campus, Tai pointed out the buildings, the big trees, the wide green lawns, where I remembered Tai had told me that when the sun set but light was still bright, green parakeets flew in slanting sheets of green to feed on the green grass. It was lovely in the half-light. Out on the highway, I asked Tai where we were going.

"Oh, to old friends of mine, Mr. and Mrs. Chavan. I have known them for years back. Their only child, a son, was born while they were teaching in Amravti. Mr. Chavan is the Minister of Agriculture."

You mean the head of the Department of Agriculture with the government in Delhi?"

"Akka, I have told you that I have friends from the highest to the lowest. These are very old and very dear friends."

We had reached the residence and were driving in through a gate to a large mansion set far back among trees. A servant was waiting at the steps; he opened the

car door. Mrs. Chavan was coming to meet us as we walked across the verandah. She greeted Tai, and met me with cordial friendliness. In through an elaborately furnished hall, to a drawing room with elegant English furniture, she led us, talking steadily with Tai. Mrs. Chavan was taller than Tai and plainer; her sari was tight about her like an American dress. There seemed to be an openness about this Maharashtrian woman. You knew at once that she was intelligent, educated, and sincere. But in addition Mrs. Chavan was a poised, sophisticated woman of the world. She seated us and offered tea. This time we were able to plead that we had just had tea with Mrs. Kamlabai. At the mention of her name, Mrs. Chavan remarked that Mrs. Kamlabai had intimated that Tai had a question. Tai at once explained and Mrs. Chavan answered, but both questions and answers were masterpieces of indirection. It would have been impossible to repeat a question or answer as having been said, but adroitly Tai was advised not to go to Nassig.

Tai asked about the son, Rajeev, Mrs. Chavan was direct about him and said in such a simple way that it was not boastful that he had taken his Tripos at Cambridge at twenty-one, the youngest ever to take it. Now he was engaged in research in physics in Delhi. He would want to see Tai; she would call him. Mrs. Chavan got up, went into the adjoining room and came back with Rajeev, a tall, slender young man, very like his mother. His warm friendship with Tai was evident at once as they talked rapidly. Only Tai's habit of early going to bed made her aware of the hour, we were so pleasantly entertained.

Mrs. Chavan told us that she had sent Kamlabai's driver home. Rajeev would drive us to the Imperial. She asked us to come for dinner, then when she found we were leaving the next day for Kashmir, urged that we let her know when we were in Delhi again so that she could entertain us. Outside the car was waiting in

the driveway, the servant opened the door for us. The son got in the driver's seat. We said good-bye again to Mrs. Chavan and the three of us were off. The little flag of the Minister of Agriculture was whipping briskly as we rode back. The Imperial doorman was out in the drive as we drove up. His face had its usual impassiveness, but as we said good night to the son of the minister, Tai calling him by his familiar name, we could feel that at the hotel we had gained status.

As we went through the lobby, I coaxed Tai to walk through the reading room into the large double drawing rooms. They were lovely rooms decorated in yellow. Pale gold walls, golden yellow brocade on French chairs, deep gold carpets, crystal chandeliers. I could imagine the gold repeated in the borders of fragile silk saris of gleaming colors, with the foil of Indian men, tight buttoned in silk Nehru coats.

We drifted about the room together, talking, then out through the French doors that lined one wall onto the terrace. Here there were many tables and chairs, but standing, a lonely little figure, looking out across the lawn, was the little Japanese man.

I whispered to Tai, "Let's talk to him a minute."

Tai and I walked directly to him, Tai introducing us. He gave us his name. He was the representative of a Japanese chemical company on business in Delhi. He asked us to sit and let him order for us. We did sit down, but refused refreshment. Once he knew that we had just come from Japan, he began to talk. Tai and I were tired with a long day, but we didn't move to go for some time. He was such a charming young Japanese, so lonely, too shy to speak to anyone. Tai brought the conversation to an end by asking him if he would like to join us on a visit to the Red Fort in the morning. He didn't have his business appointment until two; he was eager to go, to have our company, Tai old enough to be his mother, I of grandmother age. He bowed and hissed with proper Japanese manners as we said good night.

Down for breakfast, we found our Japanese young man waiting, asking if he could sit with us. Again he talked, Tai and I echoing in reply. He made no direct remarks about his family, his business, Japan nor about India nor the United States, but words hissed steadily from his mouth.

The sun glinted on the thick lenses of the young Japanese and rays of pleasure were shining out from his dark eyes, not the most usual aspect of Orientals, for most often Oriental eyes are as impassive as the Oriental face. He was neat in a tan western suit, with an expensive Japanese camera hanging heavily on his neck. Tai was sparkling with pleasure too. She had my Kodak and wore one of her golden-figured Kashmiri saris. She did not wear a red dot on her forehead because she was a widow but she had her gold chain in view and her gold bangles on her arms. She had crowded me into a silk suit, the jacket buttoned to the neck, and long sleeves. I had been adroit enough to wear a cool blouse beneath with the idea that once we had made proper entrance in our visit to the Red Fort, I could take off my warm jacket.

The tall doorman whistled up a large taxi for us. Tai and I were helped in with both Indian and Japanese courtesy. This driver, like all of them, was turbaned, with whiskers tied up in a neat little net, and, like all the drivers, he drove fiercely through the fleets of bicycle riders, tongas, rickshaws, pedicabs, cows, goats, trucks, and passenger cars. We were regal in silks, driving at such breakneck speed that I could imagine we were going to storm the Red Fort.

Tai was sitting in the center, giving Mr. Moto a bit of information about the fort. The Red Fort had been built by Shah Jahan in the seventeenth century (1627) at a cost of 10 crores of rupees. Tai always savored the sound "crores of rupees." Silently I divided the ten by five which would get it into United States money. Two

million dollars—I savored *that* sum of money too in the materials and labor it would buy in seventeenth-century India.

We had come in our swift progress to Old Delhi Gate. It stood, a crumbling monument, between the modern progress of the Indian government with its seat in New Delhi, and the glimpses of India as it had been under the Mogul emperors centuries ago in Old Delhi. We were skirting Chandi Chowk; the old bazaar buildings seemed to be falling down with age. There was an utter congestion of stalls and people. Tai, aware of my fascination with buying and selling, called my attention back sharply to the historical.

"Akka, do not miss the first view of the Red Fort." Almost as I turned my eyes to the right, the great mass of red sandstone was beside us, a wide sweep of green grass led up to the high red crenelated walls; higher still were onion-shaped roofs on small towers and the spires where Moslem prayers had been called out.

"This is Lahore Gate, the main entrance to the Red Fort," Tai said. We were out of the taxi and a guide took over in a steady drone of history. I could understand his English easily, but my ears and mind shut themselves to his chatter. Mr. Moto kept his face turned toward the guide, drinking in the dates, events, personalities, all of it. Tai, as I, walked in a dream, she of the old beauty of India, I in the fresh pleasure of seeing beauties of which I had had only ideas, not vision.

Before we entered, I stopped with surprise. There was a moat. The River Jumna was on the far side of the Fort but a moat was around the rest of the walls. There was dark dirty water below the walls. My eyes traveled up the dark red stone to the scallops at the top crenelations. These scallops were like the embroidered edges of my Indian shawls, the shape of niches on prayer rugs. I murmured about the height and width of the opening in the gate, so hard to defend. Tai murmured back, "Akka, the gate had to be a size for elephants," and I thought to myself how useful the arch pointed in the

prayer shape was for the howdah. Tai and I were walking together, her thoughts mystical, Oriental, mine practical, Western; but at times like this emotion flowed between us, bringing us close.

Inside, there were the mazes of buildings, defense for the wall, quarters for the soldiers, the business of the fort. Tai and I walked quickly along now, the guide and Mr. Moto stopping and looking at the military arrangements. We came into the open area, an enormous green expanse with white marble buildings graced with masses of trees and shrubs. Tai began to speak against the British. This space had been filled with palaces for all the court, torn down by the British. But there still was left such beauty that Tai ceased and both of us gazed at the Diwan i-Khas, a pavilion of white marble, Emperor Shah Jahan's Hall of Special Audience, eighty feet by forty feet by thirty feet high, used for daily durbar. Tai and I shared the feeling that we were invisible, in the ancient places, but here we felt we were back centuries, going to Shah Jahan's daily durbar. Softly, we walked up the shallow steps, slipped out of our sandals, and walked down the aisle made by pillars supporting repeated arches, these not simple lines but constant curves, edged with gold. Slowly we advanced toward the high throne, its carved marble shaped like a howdah: this was delicate beauty frozen in marble. Our eyes gazed on the wall back of the throne, vivid with reds and blues and greens, flowers and leaves inlaid in design. Hushed we watched the dark door in the center of this beauty for Shah Jahan to make his royal entrance, gorgeous in gold encrusted silks. The door stayed dark and closed. Tai and I looked at each other, not speaking. We walked on to catch up with the guide and Mr. Moto.

On we went into the Royal Palace, columns, arches, and fretwork of marble, the walls inlaid with gold and silver and semiprecious stones. But the gold and silver inlay now was paint, the British had torn the gold and silver treasure loose, gouged out the stones. Tai

showed me the devastation; she spoke bitterly of Lord Elgin, of the British. I thought back to the reverence she had for Queen Elizabeth the Second, of the delight with which she looked at the pictures of the royal family, of the respect she had voiced for the Earl of Mountbatten on his departure from India. Now she was basking in the past glories of the hated Moslem Emperors of India, but despising them as Moslems who ruled and converted by the sword. Tai, a truly simple devotee of Gandhi, stood in silk, castigating all of India's past rulers.

Tai and I had our minds and thoughts closed to the chatter of the guide to Mr. Moto as we gazed at the harems, royal baths, on and on. We had reached the far side of the fort, standing, looking through the arched windows at the Jumna, shallow now in the dusty plain. This was just the time, when the Jumna was not in flood, when the elephant fights would be held on this dusty plain. Tai and I were royal ladies dreaming of this gala event. Mr. Moto's voice, hissing with regret, brought us back. It was time for us to leave. As we walked, I looked back. Once those roofs had been shining gilt in the sun; now they were shadowy memories.

Mr. Moto's camera shutter had been clicking, but now Tai stopped and we snapped pictures as we stood before Diwan-i-Khas. Mr. Moto stopped again as we passed by the stalls selling souvenirs and appealed to us. He wanted so much to take a gift home to his wife; would we help him choose? We looked at bangles, many elaborate in colored glass and others dainty in carved and inlaid ivory. He bowed many times, trying to explain that she would not wear them. Tai turned to a stall of purses, intricately embroidered in pearl beads. I picked up one in scarlet and held it out to him, as Tai said, "Her American taste for red." Mr. Moto hissed and bowed some more, telling me that a married Japanese woman did not wear red. Tai selected a bag, the background black, the design a peacock in pearls.

"This is Indian design," she said, "and suitable." All

Mr. Moto's teeth were showing; he was delighted. Quickly he gave the rupees to the Indian dealer and out we went through Lahore Gate.

We said good-bye to Mr. Moto outside. Tai and I were going to the Ivory Palace to look at chess sets. Mr. Moto had his business engagement at two. We would have to have our dinner early since our train, the *Kashmir Mail*, left at seven, but we hoped he could join us for the meal. Bowing and hissing, he told us again what a pleasure it had been to him to be in our company.

"So lonely in a foreign country with nothing familiar, no one to talk to."

I had promised my three grandchildren gifts from India. Gene, the oldest at the ripe age of nine, wanted an ivory chess set. The Ivory Palace sounded like tourist bait, but Tai and I had had it recommended by Indian friends. The entrance corridors had brass, carved wood, all the handicrafts and arts of India; but the two central salesrooms were filled with high glass cases, display counters, storage drawers packed with ivory carvings. My tendency to loiter was limited by our time, and the money I was willing to spend limited choice. The oily Indian merchants tempted me with gargantuan chess sets, the pieces exquisitely carved, four, some even six inches high. Tai's taste was so discriminating that I at once took the set she liked best. I too was delighted, for half the men were Moguls in turbans and garments dyed red, the others, Rajputs in green. The ivory elephants were two inches tall and there were camels; the pawns were soldiers with bows and arrows. It was delightful. Quickly I bought ivory elephants for gifts and, with amusement, an ivory paper knife, nine elephants in solemn procession on its handle. All the elephants had their trunks up for good luck.

The ride back to New Delhi, was swift through the confusion of traffic.

"Tai, the only transportation you lack in Delhi is camels and elephants."

Tai replied by again correcting my pronunciation, "Deellee, Alka."

I knew that I never said Delhi, but Del-i did not please her. When Tai said Delhi, it was soft, liquid, rolling. It was a special word with everyone; there was a pride, a pleasure. Delhi, from Indian lips, was like the rolling song of a bird.

Back at the Imperial, we were ushered into the lobby. This time I noticed the travel booth just beside the elevators. Two Indian men were back of the counter. On it were travel folders and on the walls were scenic posters, "See Russia," "Take your vacation in Russia." Perhaps I had not seen them before because there had always been a number of Indian men crowding around looking at folders, and consulting the agents.

Packing took just minutes. Tai could not hear my pulse pounding or sense the thoughts racing through my mind. My dream of visiting the Vale of Kashmir was to come true. How could it? It was such a faraway, impossible imagining. Was it twenty years ago that I had bought my first Kashmir shawl? We were driving east each summer to visit our older son, the roads lined with antique shops. My husband set aside money for me to enjoy in them, then teased me for spending money on so many odds and ends. Then, seriously, he advised me to settle on one thing to collect. It had to be Oriental for my taste. It must be something that could be stored, for my mantles, tables, corner cupboards were full. My husband advised something rare, something hard to find. My love of textiles made the choice; I would collect Kashmir shawls.

All the way east, shop after shop, roadside barns, houses, the heads would shake "no." Once there was a hopeful, "I have a Paisley; isn't that the same?" I looked; it was a Paisley but that is not a Kashmir shawl, the finest weaving ever done. Our first trip down New Hope Road, Eugene and I went in, my husband comfortable in the shade with a book. The moment we opened the shop door, there, hung like a tapestry, was

a gleaming length of red pashmina, the fine wool used in Kashmir shawls that comes by goat or sheep pack trains over the high Himalayan passes from Tibet. It had beautiful borders and ends, the intricate Kashmir weave. I panicked and asked for the dime table (now they have dollar tables). Eugene circled around, his face as bland as an Oriental's. After many questions and some pricing of other articles he said, "How much is the Paisley?"

"Fourteen dollars," the dealer snapped back, "and I won't take it down. Three times I have climbed up there; when I get it down, and they find it is an Indian shawl, they won't have it. They want Scotch Paisleys."

In his slow quiet voice, Eugene said, "Here is fourteen dollars. I will take it down from the wall myself."

The woman's mouth drew into a tight line, her eyes lengthened into slits. These were hard days to sell. We wanted the shawl but she should have asked more and bargained. Eugene's tall length stretched up, he took out the thumb tacks; he had the lovely length of crimson with its subtle many-colored borders cradled in his arms, his eyes and my eyes meeting. This lovely beauty was ours to treasure, to enjoy.

Then the search continued, year after year, until I had fifteen shawls. I was getting books about India with references to shawls, help from the university textile authority, sending to the Library of Congress, studying the only library copy in the United States of Akbar's *Institutes*, seeing the special exhibit of Kashmir shawls in The Art Institute of Chicago, enrolling for a membership in the Metropolitan Museum in New York, using my privilege for a conference with the Near East Curator there, seeing all the shawls in their collection out on tables, ordering the two-volume *Moorcroft's Travels in India in 1819* for my very own. All of this was real, but too, it was a dream world. When my husband would say, "It's too bad for you that I do not feel able to travel abroad," I would reply, "There is only one place in the world I have longed to go, the Vale of Kashmir." It was an idealistic dream of beauty the valley lovely and

remote, the birthplace of my shawls. I knew there were wily merchants, dirty, cowardly people, crumbling decay—that was Kashmir even in Moorcroft's day. My mind was practical about Kashmir shawls, but while I recognized practicality and practiced it, I lived in dreams. Then when Tai entered my life she had said, "Akka, it is destined for you to visit the Vale of Kashmir." She read it in my palm, in the looped line of travel, the mango shape of the Vale of Kashmir.

4

Kashmir

WHEN THE KASHMIR MAIL stopped with a snort and a jolt at stations, I roused. I couldn't see out; Tai had insisted on having the inside wooden shutters tight shut, but the glass window panes were wide open so hot air and cinders were coming in. Tai wakened me when she climbed down from the upper berth. There was no ladder. I got up at once, trying to conceal my excitement over Kashmir but I was shivery with anticipation. I asked Tai if she would write a prayer to Krishna for safe journey over Banihal Pass.

"Don't have foolish fears, Akka. I wrote the note in Delhi for the journey, that means till we reach Srinagar. Remember how much you wanted to go in over Banihal Pass. Akka, you will not enjoy your traveling if you let your fears rule you."

Tai wanted to go into Kashmir over the pass just as much as I did. A few hours' flight from Delhi, an instant's swooping look at the valley, as the plane descended, did not appeal to her spirit of adventure or mine. Tai on her trip to Kashmir with the Gokhale

family had gone in on another pass, a low and easy road now closed because it led through Pakistan. She wanted the excitement of the steep road and the thrill of being at a nine thousand foot altitude. I wanted to travel the historic way of the Moguls and of the early travelers into Kashmir. I wanted to climb to the top of the mountain and look with my own dreams, down into the Vale of Kashmir.

Tai was shaking the soot and cinders out of her sheets and out of mine too. We were traveling through barren land, far north in India, at the top edge of the plains. There were some trees and scrubby growth, but nothing that looked like crops to my eyes accustomed to the vast acres of Iowa cornfields. I saw no roads. The train stopped at each village of low wooden houses; there were just a few of them. They had long cindered platforms on each side of the track and small wooden stations, each one with a latrine beside it, a temporary-looking structure like the comfort stations of early motels. The stationmaster rang the gong for the train to go. There were no passengers on or off the train, but there were a few loiterers, dark brown skinny men in loincloths.

Both of us were hungry; there was no dining arrangement on the *Kashmir Mail*. We would have to try and get some breakfast at Pathankot, but first we must plunge out and confirm our transportation over the pass. Delhi could find out nothing for us except the guidebook information that buses and station wagons were available and had marked our tickets "1st class Delhi to Srinagar." How many passengers there would be for the available transportation was our problem.

Pathankot was scrubby like the tree growth. The *Kashmir Mail* brought us in with a fast flourish and brought us to a rattling, squeaking halt. There were mean, poor-looking dwellings, cindered paths for platforms and a small railroad station. Tai had our door open, ready to jump out. There were very few of the red-clad porters. I was out fast after Tai; the porters seeing me came running for American tipping. Tai had

and he engaged in a long conversation. Then he walked across with her to the ticket office, I right behind them. The driver shouldered his way to the table; there was more conversation, head jerking, hands here and there. At last the driver gave a good low sharp jerk. Tai did the same; the ticket agents jerked their heads in reply. This time it was affirmative for one of the agents stamped our tickets. We followed out in the wake of the driver, walking with him across the square. Tai turned back to me and said, "We will have time for breakfast. The driver says we can walk in with him through the back of the restaurant."

I followed them through a row of small rooms, grimy and greasy. We came out into a room that fronted the railroad platform. It had half a dozen rickety tables with worn chairs and the dirtiest tablecloths I had ever seen. The air was stifling with grease and spice. Tai at once voiced it. "Akka, this place stinks. I cannot eat."

I with the strong stomach sat down and began to soothe her.

"We can eat boiled eggs and maybe they will have oranges. We can't make this ride on empty stomachs."

When at last an Indian, so dirty that he rivaled the tablecloth, took our order, Tai said, "They have eggs, oranges, and we can get Pepsi Cola. I can't drink milk from here or have you drink their tea."

I asked about our tickets. Before she told me, she admonished me.

"Akka, don't be so nervous always. You can't be that way when you travel. Settle down now. We have our tickets confirmed. There were already seven passengers. The official number is eight, and the authorities are strict about overloading, but three of the passengers are young children, paying half fare. In addition, our tickets were booked through from Delhi to Srinagar, but notice of the sale was not received by this office as it should have been. Since the children are small, the weight will not be more than the usual amount, and the mother would have to hold the smallest child in her arms anyway, so they are taking us."

The tables around us were crowded with Indians, their food going down by hand. We ate quickly. Once outside, Tai drew in big gulps of the fresh air, and we walked back to the station wagon. Directions had been given, and our luggage was there, along with a tremendous pile of other holdalls and bags. No passengers were on hand but Tai at once got in, I after her. It was a heavy, large vehicle; we had had to struggle to get the door open. There were three rows of seats inside, the center one shorter. The upholstery was black leather; the seats sagged down; the car was hard worn. Tai put me next to the window in the back seat that would have the view, and sat down beside me. There was a row of tin cans under the seat in front of us. I at once asked what they were for and Tai advised me not to be so curious. I wanted to walk over to some stalls and see what was being sold; Tai didn't even answer that time.

Soon the driver and the porters came. There was a lot of heaving up and taking down of luggage and the other passengers came. The mother with the three children climbed in and tried to get us into another seat. Tai said nothing. I whispered, "Why don't we sit in the next seat?"

Tai whispered back, "There will have to be three in that seat; it is so much smaller, we would be squeezed. This is a hard ride. Wait, Akka, you will see how it will come out."

When the station wagon driver pushed the starter, grumbling that we were almost an hour late by the schedule, Tai and I were still in the back seat. The mother had the year-old child in her lap; her three-year-old girl was wedged in next to Tai; the seven-year-old boy was between the two men passengers on the middle seat. The bulky driver filled a good half of the front seat, and beside him was the young woman of the party, tall and full faced, attractive. The baggage was piled high on top and the running boards were lashed full of petrol tins. The road began at once to rise, in easy, long stretches; *no high mountains* were visible, but we were following the contour of rising hills. There were fields and a winding small river below us.

We came to a scattering of huts and drew up sharply. This was the border station. Some of the petrol tins had to be moved off the running board for us to get out. There were several buses standing by so that a crowd of Indian travelers was standing around. A turbaned official sat back of a table. The Indians were presenting their permits to him. He stamped them and they were ready to go. I presented myself just after Tai, but at once I was a special problem. There was a lot of conversation and head jerking which I couldn't interpret as either yes or no, and Tai did not enlighten me.

The rest of our party was ready to go but Tai and the driver talked earnestly. The driver went up to the man at the table again; both of them jerked their heads. Impatiently, we waited. At last, two tall turbaned Indians came and very leisurely walked over to the table. Servants began running about, one finally arriving with a key. Then the tallest of the turbaned officials jerked his head at me. Tai said sharply, "Akka, go with him." I followed, with the quaking that customs always gives me. Back, at the side, was a small ramshackle building. The servant unlocked the door; we entered. I was motioned to a broken chair. There was the usual rough board for a table, a cupboard on the wall.

I presented my permit but the official did not touch it. I sat there trembling during a long wait, until another servant came running with another key, with which he opened the cupboard, took out a ledger and a folder of long loose sheets and put them on the table. The official now opened the ledger, looked at many pages, looked at my permit; then he put out on the table two long forms. I spoke to him in English, but he did not reply, so I filled them out, line after line of small print, and signed my name. He took the two pages and read my answers on every line. He now knew my mother's and father's names, their birthplaces, all my life statistics as well as the details of this trip. He jerked his head to the side; the servant in the doorway went running, as I sat helpless. "Running" is hardly the word, but it was a fast pace for an Indian servant. It seemed

long to me as the servant went over to the first table, then came back, gave the stamp to my official. He slowly pressed it to the paper, handed it to me. I walked so rapidly over the road, the stones almost throwing me off balance, that Tai called out, "Take your time, Akka."

Once we were back, each in his former seat, I complained in a low voice to Tai over my delay. Tai reminded me—I was grateful it was in a low voice—that when she got her permit to enter the United States, she had had to have her thumbprints taken and other indignities including an examination of her "tools." (Tai's pronunciation was British but "stools" was one word she had not mastered.)

The driver was keeping a brisk pace on the road that now was higher than the plain, and gently rising. The boy made quite an effort to sit in the front seat. The driver said, "No," and pushed him back when he tried to climb over. The mother called out, "There is room. Let him up front."

The driver turned back; his big voice boomed, "Only one passenger is permitted in the front seat." It was plainly evident that our driver was in full command of our party. I, remembering stories of the dangers of Banihal Pass, was thankful that we had a strong, powerful driver and a heavy car. We were going in over what had been called for years the Forbidden Pass. It had been reserved for the use of emperors and their entourages and the road is still called the Imperial Road. From the year 1587, when Akbar seized Kashmir, this had been the route the emperors had followed as they traveled to spend their summers in the Vale. I remembered almost word for word a vivid account of one of these trips:

"From Delhi to Kashmir in 1664-65 the entourage of the Mogul Akbar contained 300,000 people, and its transport consisted of 200,000 horses, mules, camels, oxen and elephants. In the mountains which rim the Vale of Kashmir there occurred a tremendous traffic accident as the Moguls' moving city made its elephantine way. Fifteen elephants fell over a cliff when unable to advance or turn around on the narrow road."

Already the air was cooler and soon we saw the temple spires of Jammu. There were many houses and streets on the rising ground. As we drove into it there were industries, the Prince of Wales College, old temples, and the winter palace of the present Maharaja of Kashmir on long streets above the bank of the Chenab River. The station wagon pulled up sharply into a parking area, among several buses, and we got out after the petrol tins were removed. Tai told me that this was the first Dak bungalow and we were stopping for lunch. It looked like a two-story hotel, part built of mud bricks, part of wood, in pretentious English style but in a state of dilapidation.

Up high steps we climbed onto a verandah, crowded with Indian girls, chattering, laughing. I thought of Kamlabai's nieces on vacation in Kashmir; this is the way they would go and come, a busload of college girls. There was a flutter of pale colors with their saris, black hair—like heavy silk in long braids—and the golden color of their lovely faces, with their soft dark eyes. We followed our group inside, into a narrow lounge filled with bus passengers; women in saris and the men in Western clothes. On we went, into a dining room where tables had been pushed together to form long tables, family style. Dishes, scraps of food were all over, table cloths dirty and stained with the yellow of the turmeric in the curry. The young woman of our party and the mother with the children went on through another door, Tai and I following. We found ourselves in a bare rest room, a smaller room beyond with a flush toilet that, it was immediately evident, was out of order. An open door ventilated it enough so that Tai did not remark on the stink, but the room was awash with water and puddles where children had used the floor. The hand basin was filthy and there was no soap. I had toilet paper in my bag, slippery sheets from Sweden.

When Tai and I had managed, we went back to the table to find the young woman sitting between the two men. There had been little conversation in the station wagon but already we knew that the young woman was

married and was on her way to spend the vacation from her job in Delhi with her husband, an army officer, stationed in Kashmir. The men had given out no information but we judged by their pompousness that they were minor government officials. Three tins of warm beer were in front of them; the girl was giggling, both men had their faces leaning toward her, both were talking to her.

Tai took seats for us at the end of the table as far as she could get from the group and gave me a sharp nudge with her elbow. It took something extreme for Tai to use this common signal.

"Look at that, Akka, and she is a married woman." Tai, strict in prohibition (Hindus are not permitted liquor in their religion), averted her face. The warm beer went into their stomachs and all three began a silly laughing. Tai kept up her remarks as we ate a little of the poor food to sustain us.

Soon we were back at the station wagon, the driver ready, waiting there. The mother and the children came. In a few minutes, he went in and soon came out with the three, and we were packed in the car in the same order. Off we dashed away from the ancient spires of Jammu on a road rising, following the tops of hills, fields green below us.

In a sudden turn, once we had crossed the Chenab River, a wide glacial stream, the mountains—the Pir Punjab range—were before us. The driver shifted gears with a clash, and up we plunged, switching back and forth on short runs of the road, then suddenly dashing out to a jumping-off place where he would wrench the wheel with all his strength around a hairpin turn. The road was a narrow one, car width, the edge marked by a parapet of loose stones, useless as a protection but a guide to the driver's eyes. Although the sun was shining brightly overhead, the mountain on the one side of us cast a cold shade on the station wagon. I from my seat could look out and down the dizzy height into sunshine.

We were thrown from side to side, and in spite of the fact that our progress on the switchback roads

seemed largely horizontal, we were gaining altitude rapidly. My heart had moved up into my throat the first time we had dashed to the rim and made the quick turn, and my heart stayed right up in my throat: there was no moment that was not perilous. The little girl clinging to her mother let out one sharp wail and up came everything all over her mother. Tai held out her arms and took the younger child, still sleeping. The mother was mopping with a little blanket; all of us were running down the windows, letting in the cold air. The boy between the men didn't cry out, just choked, and one of the men called out, "Where is a tin?" I grabbed one from under the seat and passed it up quickly. The man held it and the little boy let go. The other man yelled at the driver to stop. The driver, his eyes never leaving the treacherous road, yelled back, "We can't stop. They'll get used to it."

The sickening stench of the upchucking filled the car. The driver called out, "Throw the can out; there are plenty more." Out went the can. I passed up another. One of the men took the boy on his lap, opened his own wool suit coat and folded him close to his body warmth. The boy did not speak or cry out, but from time to time would put his head forward, and the man would hold the can up for him. The mother tossed the soiled blanket out the window and pulled the little girl close in her arms. Tai cuddled the sleeping baby close. I shivered with fear and cold. Up in the front seat, the young woman slept, her head tipped to the side at a silly angle.

Shortly, we came to the site of the new big tunnel that leads directly into Kashmir. An Indian with a flag stopped us and directed us into a place to park in the midst of trucks and big machinery. Army trucks were screeching down from the mountain with a roar. Soldiers in khaki uniforms and round khaki caps were all about the working area, and there were engineers, important with blueprints. Our driver got out, took off the petrol cans (this time he used one of the tins) and shoved it empty up on top, amid our luggage. I was so stiff Tai

had to help me out. At once, we walked a bit up the road, I was desperate with nature's call; Tai was desperate with lack of privacy. We were really out of view of the main group of workmen, and there was a bit of protection with a couple of fair-sized rocks on the inner side of the road. I squatted, Tai protecting. Almost at once a truck roared by, the soldiers stared and laughed. Tai was furious, but she was so desperate that she squatted too.

Walking back, we laughed and eased our tension. At the work center there were barrels of water for the big cement mixer; one of the men in our party had carried a tin of it to the mother. She had cleaned up the children and the back seat. Where the cement poured out of the mixer, there were two workmen catching it on a big woven reed tray; before them passed a line of small boys, ten years or maybe small twelve. The two men lifted the heavy tray. Down it came on the small sausage of a turban on a boy's head, his skinny arms up bracing it, his skinny body on thin little legs settling down and reeling under the weight. The boy staggered a few steps, then, straining, lifted himself and the heavy tray of cement up a half a dozen makeshift steps, crumbling pieces of rock. At the top, a man seized the tray, dumped it into a conveyor that carried the cement by machinery into the tunnel. Then the boy slid, half falling with the empty tray down the embankment to be again in line. One of the smallest boys slipped to the side, out of that small, endless chain of torture. In the instant, with bitter words and vicious kicks, the boy was driven back into line.

A whistle blew sharply. I jumped. I was so overwrought. The cement mixer ground slowly to a halt. The boys dropped their trays and ran to the edge of the road, scrambling down, digging out little cloth bags of food they had cached there. But one boy had gone to one of the barrels of water, high as he was tall; up he stretched and got his bare arms down into the cold water. He lifted them up, shaking the water off; his arms had been burned fiery red with the flying cement dust. He stood there an instant, dark hair rough with

the dust, but with fair, lovely face, almost feminine in the delicacy of its beauty, his slender body poised in grace. This I knew was my first Kashmiri.

Our driver called, and Tai pulled me back to the car; we climbed in over the mother. Tai, as soon as she was seated, held her arms out for the baby, the mother taking the little girl in her arms. The two men were in their places. As the boy climbed in, he looked up at the man who had held him. Without a word, the coat was opened, and the boy was again held close. The smell was gone. We had the windows shut, the air was so cold. Up and off we went to horseshoe curves, switchbacks, and hairpin turns. The man next to the window shouted out: he could count seven strips of road below us. The scenery was magnificent but now we were passing army trucks and the excitement of the ride was equal to the beauty of nature.

We were high in the mountains and the afternoon was well along when we rounded another of the hundreds of hairpin turns. The dangerous moment passed, the moment you imagine yourself plunging down, over the rocks, down onto the beautiful green treetops, the deceptively soft green of the treetops held up so invitingly with stout hard limbs, thousands of feet below. The driver, with his powerful arms and shoulders, had wrenched the wheel and had us back on another series of switchbacks. All at once before us there was a flock of sheep and goats, hundreds of them. In that instant, the station wagon came to a screeching halt, the tall thin Moslem leader of the flock, his hands folded upwards in prayer, his deep, dark eyes imploring, was almost under the wheels of the station wagon. Heavy wool turban of dark green, wool vest, heavy shirt, long loose wool trousers, leather shoes, the toes turned up in a sharp point, this arrogant owner of the herd held us with the power of his eye as well as with his person. The driver groaned and stopped the engine saying, "They will give their lives for a sheep anytime." Now we could hear the Moslem voice, begging with soft commands, not whining, and I asked about his beard, dyed bright orange.

The driver and the Indians could tell me nothing about his fantastic beard, heavy, not an even color of orange, but bright deep hues and trimmed to a neat long point in front. (Reading at home, on my return, I discovered that a Moslem who has gone to Mecca is entitled to dye his beard orange red. In a remote place like Kashmir, a very holy man will take this privilege. Every leader of the twenty or more herds we saw that afternoon had his whiskers dyed. Being the owner of a flock may have given them the same holy privilege.)

The beard framed the dark, despotic face, with its dark piercing eyes, eyes that gazed daily on the immensity of high mountains but that now held at bay a powerful station wagon, strong representative of the age of machinery, eyes that kept his flock safe from this modern danger.

The sheep had turned in terror at our approach. Down the mountain, some of the goats had scrambled up the stiff rocks, and some were warily pushing past our car, driven and herded by two stout men with long poles. On and on the sheep and goats came, proud big animals already with their heavy winter coats of wool. Our driver said, "This is a very large flock; there are probably a thousand of them. They are being brought down from the high mountains to the milder climate around Jammu. This is a sight you see just for a few days fall and spring. They are valuable, more than a hundred dollars for each sheep. This man is very wealthy."

There the tall figure stood, hands still in prayer, holding us. Baaing, edging in and out, the sheep crowding close together, away from the car, passed by us on the narrow road. Two more men with poles were in the center of the flock, pushing and prodding with their long poles. At last the end of the procession came; two more men were at the rear, with a pair of powerful big black dogs running to the sides, up and down, bringing the stragglers of the sheep and goats into line. Still our car stood and still the owner held us. Back of the flock came a little group of women, tall and straight in their long wool garments, their ankles clanking with silver

bracelets, several girls clinging close to them; the women looked straight ahead. At the very end, there were three young boys, each carrying a little lamb in his arms.

The owner moved on at the rear of his flock; the station wagon started with a rush. It was four o'clock. We met another herd, this time not more than fifty sheep. We seemed to meet another flock each time we rounded a horseshoe bend. The road was even more precipitous, and now there was the delay and hazard with the herds. The Indians were silent, but I called out to the driver in curiosity and fear.

"The pass closes at five. I'm trying to make it," the driver answered, as on we rushed. He would crawl through the small flocks, almost brushing the owner down the mountain side. The larger flocks—the owners more determined, tall, arrogant with their turbans, deep eyes and orange whiskers—would stop him; they seemed impaled on the car's radiator. We were becalmed in a sea of sheep, a stormy sea surging by, baaing and bleating. We met more than twenty herds. The sun was behind the Pir Pandel mountain range. It was dusk, and night was closing fast as we plunged up, faster and higher.

Suddenly we were in a row of army trucks. Beside us were some low barracks at the side of the road with Indian soldiers walking about. Our driver threw us forward with the sudden braking of the car and I sighed with relief to have the awful climbing over, but in the next instant I was wondering where we would sleep. The two men in the middle seat were demanding to get out, both of them saying that they had military passes. Our driver, removing the remaining few full petrol tins from the running board, his big shoulders sagging, said, "The barriers are down. You can try, but once the barriers are down they let no one through the pass."

All of us got out. We were cramped and worn, and I was so lame I could hardly walk up with Tai to see the barrier. I shivered in the high mountain air as Tai urged me on. "Come, Akka, it will do you good to move about." The barriers that closed the road, long arms

of wood and steel, like our railroad gates, were manned by Indian soldiers with drawn guns. The first vehicle in the line behind them was a station wagon. Tai and I walked back, fast now to keep warm, watching for the occupants. We looked in a minute at the lighted cubicle that was the command post. Inside the men of our party with their military passes were talking to the unmoving figure of the officer in charge. Our driver was standing outside; he gave a quick jerk of his head to Tai. She interpreted for me. "There is no chance of going on tonight, Akka. We will have to go back to a Dak bungalow. I'm desperate and you must be too; we must quickly hunt a place."

Among the soldiers standing about on the mountain side of the road, I saw three men who looked like Americans, and we heard voices of American women and children down on the other side of the road.

Tai and I picked our way through stones and bushes and found a place. We were just up when three women and several children came pushing past us. I said, "Hello, are you Americans? I am from the U.S.A." They scrambled past still talking among themselves. Again I called out, "I'm Iowa. Who are you?" One unctuous voice called back, "We are from Ohio." All of us were up to the road now, but the women walked rapidly, the children running in the direction of the barrier. Tai said to me in the voice she used only for speaking in large halls, "Missionaries. Just like them!" *

The driver was by the station wagon, the others were in their places. "We must get back to the Dak bungalow and secure places for the night." He banged the door after us, and we went rushing down the mountain in the dark. It was just a few miles back to Ramban but it seemed as if we were crashing down the whole precipice. There were objects dark, shadowy, in the road ahead of us; we stopped abruptly. Ahead of us, was a line of nomads on horses. Slowly our car began to pass them. I strained my eyes in the darkness to see. There were a couple of dozen of them on rough, short-legged

* On the other hand, Tai, because of ill health, went often to the United Missions hospital in Nepal. She received devoted care from the medical missionaries there and became their good friend.

started with the usual dash. As we went around the corner, my nose was flat against the window; I was looking for the nomads. There was a small pile of blackened embers. The nomads were gone.

The sun was shining on us. The trees now were evergreens, their fragrance pungent. The station wagon scraped close to sheer, flat banks of rock, blasted out for the narrow road we traveled. The broken bits of rock made a low barrier between us and the depth below, a depth that looked carpeted with the feathering dark green of the conifers. We passed low barracks at the side of the road and were again at the barrier. Now in addition to the two soldiers with the guns there was a gateman. The barriers were up, but our car stopped; our driver gave toll to the gateman and they engaged in a chat. This morning our driver was taking his time. Once through the barrier, I anticipated the pass at once, but we still were climbing steeply along switchbacks. We came around a horseshoe turn, up sharply, and the station wagon clashed to a stop in a large area filled with army trucks and workmen. In front of us there was a breastwork of stone with a tunnel entrance, one car wide. Our driver got out and so did our party. I learned then that the last bit of Banihal Pass was through this tunnel. On the other side we would look down into the Vale of Kashmir, look down into that lovely vale of dreams.

Our party was still standing close together, worried by the news that the tunnel was closed by fallen rock. All of us were lightheaded with the thin air; one of the men drew out his guidebook and told me with a good quick wag of his head that we were at 9,291 feet. Our driver came back from his conference with the engineer in charge of the tunnel. Even our stout driver looked worried and gave a dispirited jerk of his head as he told us that we would have to wait and see what could be done. The station wagon could go up and around on a temporary bypass. As a rule, the passengers walked through the tunnel when fallen rock blocked the passage of the car, but this rock was so large that

we couldn't get by it. I promptly urged that we ride around the bypass with the driver. This was met with looks of horror and the information that the bypass was open only to chauffeurs. It was forbidden to passengers. Now there was discussion as to whether the old lady, meaning me, would be able to walk the considerable distance through the pass. I said stoutly, "Of course I can walk through." All of them looked at me, wagging their heads sharply.

Tai didn't help the situation by taking hold of my wrist and saying, "Akka, your pulse is pounding and you are as white as a sheet."

I jerked my hand away and said, "I can walk as well as the rest of you."

Our driver, always practical, said that the workmen would help us through the pass; a man would walk on each side of me. I could support myself on their arms, and a workman would carry the children, but we would have to wait.

The party moved about a bit. The woman with her two younger children was taking care of them behind a bit of rock. I had a scarf wound almost as heavy as a turban on my head and a wool coat over a wool suit, the long wool skirt drooping down over my thin old legs, ending in paper thin slippers. Tai and the young women had coats on too, and the men of our party had wool coats, trousers, and heavy wool scarfs around their necks. All of us had to hold ourselves still from our shivering in the thin cold mountain air.

We waited a long time for the tunnel to open, most of us not feeling like moving. There was the constant question as to how long it would take to clear the rock. Perhaps we would have to go back to Ramban, the Dak bungalow. My head was light, I stood there, full of airy dreams of Kashmir. Suddenly the word came; we could go through. At once we started, our driver organizing us. First the woman with the children, men carrying the two small ones—the mother took the boy's hand—then the two men of the party, the young woman with one of them, Tai with the other. She was looking back at

me walking between a soldier and a younger engineer. They held out their arms, but I said I was all right. The narrow tunnel became black almost at once; the young men without a word seized my arms, half-lifting me along. It felt as if we were walking through a brook. There were several inches of water and oozy mud, and my thin slippers hit down on sharp stones that made me stagger. There was no light till we came to the rock fall. There pumped-up gas lights feebly illumined a great pile of rock. We had to crowd close to the side of the tunnel, slimy, dripping, to get around the stone. Tai kept calling to me, "Are you all right, Akka?" I didn't have breath to answer. I wasn't certain that I wasn't dying. My thoughts were vague but I did form the idea, projecting myself out into the view just ahead, that this would be a lovely place to die. The men, half-carrying me along, answered Tai that we were fine. Then there was light ahead; the road was drier but still stony.

Out of the arch we struggled, the men still holding my arms. Across the road, we walked to the parapet. There was the Vale of Kashmir! There below us was the lovely valley, Akbar's private garden! I could see the Jhelum curling in the river loop, the pattern of the age-old design. How lyric all the tongues become that behold this view. My wonder, my thoughts became emotion with no form, just an intense feeling of beauty. Our station wagon came crashing round the pass, but it didn't disturb me. The others walked about a bit, but I stood looking down at my lovely dream.

At last Tai gently urged me into the station wagon. My daze of beauty lifted like a fog. I was exhilarated, mad with joy. I was in Kashmir. We were rushing down the mountain. Soon I would be in the Vale itself. There were still switchbacks and a few hairpin turns, but mostly we were going sharply down, only three thousand feet this time. Srinagar is at six thousand feet. We were passing army trucks; we were below the evergreens; we were in the valley, on a winding road, beside us small fields, farmhouses, verdure. My thoughts wanted poetic words like "verdure." Girls and men were cutting rice

in paddies. The green and blue and red of their garments, the swing of their short curved sickles was like a ballet. Along the road trotted boys hidden under heavy tents of rice straw bundles. The houses were tall, of wood with wooden carved balconies. There was water everywhere. There were fruit trees and flowers. We were moving between long lines of tall, narrow trees into Srinagar. Softly Tai let the sounds come from her lips like a song, "Shree-na-gar"; it was a trilling. There was a row of tongas drawn up at the side of the road and we turned into a brick-walled compound full of buses and passengers in confusion. Our station wagon stopped abruptly; we jolted forward in our seats and got out in front of a good sized brick building with a big sign "Kashmir Government Transport Headquarters." I clutched Tai's arm. "Tai, we're here. You have brought me to my dream."

A small voice called loudly, "Shoe shine, shoe shine, lady." There was a brown ragged little boy almost pushing his stand under my foot. He was looking up at me with his melting brown eyes; he had the traditional beauty of the Kashmiri. Instantly, he began smearing on black grease.

Tai said sharply, "How much?"

He looked at her with an impudent glint in his eyes. "One rupee for the American lady."

Tai's "Nonsense!" cracked down on him and he settled for four annas, Tai grumbling. "Two annas would be ample. Akka, you have to watch out for the Kashmiris."

The children of our party had run to meet their father; the young woman had been met by a tall young Indian officer, just as handsome as she was; the two men had disappeared; and we were besieged by porters. Tai began a brisk organization; she selected two porters and went over with them to the station wagon where our bags were being loosened from their tight rope lashing. She thanked our driver. I had wanted to tip him but Tai hadn't even replied to my question about that. The porters had our luggage up on their heads.

and we followed them out of the compound, across the road to the line of tongas. The drivers from the two taxis addressed their importunities to me. I stood silent, unmoving, as Tai quickly selected the cleanest tonga and the best horse. The horses were larger and the tongas' wheels larger than those in India. The step at the back was broken off and stuffing oozed from the seat. Tai made the driver dust before she would get in. She held her hand out to help me, but the tonga was so high I had to lift one foot up onto the floor with my hands, then I heaved and Tai pulled to get me in.

Our tonga wallah, a shriveled dark man with a black skullcap, his clothes a bundle of wool rags, gave a shrill cackle, snapped the long fly of his whip, and we were off. The horse put back his ears, broke wind, stopped, put up his tail and let go. Tai's nose went up. "Whew, what a stink." She called abuse at the wallah, but not in English. Tai had ordered him to take us out Boulevard Road to the hotel where Kamlabai's nieces had stayed. The Oberai Palace Hotel, one of the Oberai chain to which the Imperial in Delhi belonged, where Westerners stayed, had been closed for the season. I was delighted; this would give me the chance to stay in an Indian hotel but Tai was not too pleased with the prospect.

"Tai, how different this is from your trip to Kashmir with the Gokhales." My passion for Kashmir shawls had led her to many tellings of this vacation before the Partition. Mr. and Mrs. Gokhale, their four children. Mrs. Gokhale's uncle Mr. Despandi (the old man we had called on in Amravti), Tai, and nine servants had come up from Nagpur by train, traveling in two sections. Mrs. Gokhale did not leave her compartment during the journey and ate only food prepared by her own cook and handled by her own servants. Mr. Gokhale, the uncle, and Tai got off the train at stations, bought and ate food from vendors, and walked about. They went into Kashmir by car over the short road and low pass in from what is now Pakistan. In Srinagar they lived in a large comfortable bungalow, across the

little canal that borders the Bund, the principal business street. Their time was spent in idle ease, boat trips, excursions, picnics, horseback riding in the mountains.

The road from the Government Transport Headquarters led us along a residential street, the houses back of walls. Soon our road slanted across a canal; beside it, as far as the eye could see, there was a row of chinar trees, many of them old with enormous trunks. The maple shaped leaves are used as a major design in wood carving, embroidery, papier-mâché painting. The road ran across the canal on grass, with no sign of the supporting understructure of a bridge except a low rail at the roadside. Our tonga made a sharp turn; we had the canal on one side and on the other beside an asphalt strip, a mud road. Here were Kashmiri men, women, and children and a row of shops. Above them were living quarters, made of brick and mud, shutters and lattice windows—the people, the houses, a miserable sight. The people were wearing long one piece garments of dark wool, the men's brown, the women's black, blue, and green. Their feet were bare; a few had sandals.

Tai and I in our tonga made another turn; now we were on a wider road, Boulevard Road. There was a low stone wall at our left with steps at intervals down to water and the water was widening. "Dal Lake," Tai said, but she was watching the signs set up on the other side of the road in front of what looked like good-sized private homes set back of walls in gardens.

The lake widened and across from us on the water there was a solid line of houseboats shaped like tremendous Venetian gondolas, but with a carved wood superstructure, a roof deck with supports for awnings over that, and signs with their names. I pulled at Tai's arm, like a child.

"Please, please, Tai, let's live on a houseboat."

"It's too late in the season and too cold."

"There are people on some of them, Tai. See, they have white canvas on their sun decks and awnings. Please."

"Akka," Tai spoke with exasperation, "I have told you they draw their water from the lake. You can see how filthy the water is. I won't live that dirty way or risk your life with it. Don't call my attention; I must help the driver find this address."

I too looked now at the dwellings.

"Tai, there is one that says Palace Hotel; see the sign leaning up against the wall."

It looked like a large, well-kept house, a relic of British days. But now all the houses we were passing were run down. The driver turned in a driveway. Behind the wall the garden was overgrown, and the big house was unpainted wood, falling down. Tai's nose had a way of lifting as she tightened her nostrils when she was displeased. I was delighted to see her do this because the place looked impossible.

There was nothing for us to do but look, for the manager was already out, asking us to come in. He led us to the side and around the house. There were tables outdoors, set among grass and weeds, and stray bushes, not trimmed but worn down by use. He led us in through a door up a back stairway, saying that he used the front rooms of the house himself. The stairs were unpainted, littered with rubbish; the hall had thin and dirty carpets. The rooms were bare except for dirt and charpoys.

Tai said, "This is not suitable for an American lady."

The man glibly answered, "Of course, I cater to college students; they don't want to be bothered with furnishings, they sit all day in the garden, talking and drinking tea. You saw my lovely garden; the flowers are gone now, the season is nearly over." As a last plea, he added, "Our cooking is very good. Our cook understands European food."

Tai wasted no words; she was going down the steps, cautioning me not to trip.

Back in our tonga, I suggested trying the Palace Hotel. "It's just a few houses back." Tai ordered the wallah, and back we went, this time into a pleasant tended garden lined with dahlias.

The Palace Hotel was a good-sized, two-story house of brick, with heavy wooden shutters at the windows, vines hanging thick, dripping down over the small entrance porch. Tai and I walked in to find ourselves in a circular entrance hall. Beside a wide stair with heavy, polished rail there was a large desk and sitting at it a man wearing a high black cap of caracul. He got up and came to meet us. Yes, he had a suitable room. It was just at the head of the stairs; it would not be difficult for the American woman to walk that far. Their cook would prepare special food for me. As a rule they took only Indian guests, but there were few guests now for this was the end of the season. They would be closing October 15 and they could go to the extra work to accommodate me.

"Raji!" he called, "Raji!" The manager led us through open French doors into a rectangular room. "This is the lounge," he said.

The ceiling was high, with heavy molding. Darker green oblongs were visible on the green walls where pictures had once hung. The furniture was heavy, upholstered in dark velvets. On the floor was a heavy carpet, really a rug, one corner turned up. The manager went over and kicked it down. There was a fireplace black with soot. There were curtains at the windows, and a pair of curtained, closed French doors at the side of the room.

Just as the manager said, "The dining room is closed; they are changing the tables," a young man appeared. White cotton trousered, white jacketed, good looking, not as tall as the manager, he had no cap on his heavy, shiny black hair.

The manager's voice was curt; "Raj, take the ladies up to the room over the lounge."

As we went back through the entrance hall, I noticed that it had a heavy circular carpet matching the lounge rug in color and pattern. The carpet on the stairs was red. It didn't match the pale beige and delicate flowers of the other carpets, and it slipped under my foot on the first tread. There were brass rods fastened in brass loops at each side, but the red strip pulled loose

with our steps. This was a thin substitute. Once the house must have had a *stair carpet* matching the others, a heavy carpet that fitted tightly under the brass rods. We followed the circle of the bannister around the upstairs hall; Raj opened the door of a room just over the lounge. There was a double group of windows on the side; the end of the room was partitioned off. The walls here were pale gray, again with evidence of pictures. There was a fireplace, the floor had had a carpet but now was bare boards. There was a dirty chain-stitched Kashmir rug between the beds, placed one on each side of the windows, and over in the corner a wardrobe.

Tai asked to see the bathroom. Raj led us into the space, partitioned off at the end; it had been a dressing room but was bare now except for a narrow table that had been nailed up out of scraps of wood. A door, at the side, was open into the bathroom.

Raj looked and spoke with pride of the flush toilet. "It was just installed at the beginning of the season, next year we will put in basins and tubs."

A door opened out on a narrow balcony, a couple of boards for floor and a steep stair down. Looking out, I said, "Fire escape."

Tai replied, "Akka, you know that is the way the sweeper comes and goes to tend the bathroom."

Tai gave Raj money to pay off the *tonga*, told him to have our luggage sent up and to let us know as soon as the dining room was open.

A couple of servants brought our things up, Raj ahead of them. He had them put our bedrolls on the beds, which had only springs and thin mattresses. Tai did not take her saris out of her suitcase and advised me to hang in the wardrobe *only* a couple of dresses, and not to put my comb and brush or toilet articles out. "Servants in a place like this will use anything."

At once she told Raj the tip per day that we would pay on leaving, and, opening her dressing case, gave him as a gift the bottle of hair oil she had bought in Mathura and some money, asking him to buy for her some oil

scented with sandalwood, and some soap. Even I could tell, without a word of thanks or a change of expression on his face, that Raj was delighted with the arrangements. Raj was enough of a personality that we called him Raj, not bearer, from the very first moment. He was a good looking young man: broad-shouldered, his olive face a long oval with high forehead, well-shaped prominent nose, dark eyes, heavy black hair, greased back smooth. He had the handsome appearance I had expected to see in the Kashmiri women. He didn't have the weak, undependable look I had read about in the men. Winters, he went down to Delhi and served in private families; summers, he worked in Srinagar. He could get work because he spoke English. But the tourist business in Kashmir had been badly hurt by the fighting between India and Pakistan.

Raj went into the bathroom and advised us that a bucket of hot water had been brought, and that he would go down and see how dinner was coming.

I spent most of my time at the window looking out. In the garden below, red and yellow dahlias stood as high as the wall, screening the road. The water of Dal Lake was beyond, green and gray in the late afternoon. A row of houseboats fringed the opposite shore, close enough that I could see a shikara drawn up to one of them and people climbing up a little ladder onto the front balcony of one of the houseboats. Back of the boats there was green foliage and a glimmer of water, the green continuing up into tall, thin poplar trees. Above them on a bare hill was a fort, and misty in the distance, a dim view of snow-tipped mountains.

"That is Hari Parbat, a Pathan Fort," Tai said, coming and standing beside me. "After dinner, we will go for a shikara ride. How beautiful Dal Lake is, Akka."

Raj came. He didn't knock and he didn't enter until he was bid. Tai seemed to know by intuition when he was outside. He told us dinner was ready. Descending, I found the thin carpet on the stairs treacherous; it slipped with my every step. Raj, going down ahead of

us, was told by Tai to see that it was tightened. The manager came from his desk to stand at the foot of the stairs.

"Would Madam look at some carpets this evening?"

Tai said curtly that after dinner we were going for a shikara ride, that I was too tired to look at things so soon.

The manager affably replied, "Perhaps Madam would take just a few minutes; my friend has some rare carpets, very good prices."

Raj took us to the lounge, the French doors open; he ushered us in and left us. The narrow, long, low-ceilinged dining room had an acrid, greasy smell. Tai's nose was wrinkling. Along one side of the room there was a row of casement windows, tables beside them. Tai chose the first one; it had the cleanest cloth, then she struggled and pushed the casement window open. We sat till she was impatient. It was early for dinner and we were the only ones in the dining room. When the bearer came he was short and stout in white coat and trousers so dirty that spots no longer showed. It didn't take Tai long to discover that the uniform had been issued at the beginning of the season and never washed. It was evident no one in Kashmir used the water that is everywhere.

The meal opened with a greasy soup which I ate and Tai pushed aside with disdain. Chicken, rice, vegetables followed. We were so hungry that the poor food tasted good, but Tai was indignant that a lumpy, tasteless pudding was served for dessert. "An English pudding," she said scornfully. Our bearer was timid, nervous. A second bearer, thin and little, came into the dining room, but stayed at a distance. Tai demanded that there should be fruit for our breakfast. The bearer was suffering but silent.

Once we were finished Tai said with a lilt in her voice, "Come, Akka, I will take you for your first shikara ride."

When we came into the entrance hall, the manager got up again from his desk. "My friend will soon be here with the carpets"

Tai ignored the remark and asked shikara rates. When the manager did not give a direct answer, Tai whipped out the official guide and read out its listed rate.

It was dusk as we walked through the garden, across the road, and stood on the stone steps that led to Dal Lake. The boatmen, not expecting customers at this hour, were standing about talking and smoking bidis, coarse cigarettes. Some scrambled for their boats, some held out their hands, as each loudly called to us the superior elegance of his shikara. Tai had told me that the shikaras were like Venetian gondolas, but they resembled curtained palanquins on water and I could see that we were to recline Oriental fashion on red and orange embroidered cushions with the smiling tough Kashmiri paddling astern.

Tai stepped into the nearest one, putting her hand back to steady me. My heavy foot made the slight craft sway and me with it, until the boatman took hold of my wrist. It was several steps back to the seat in the slim boat. Tai was cautioning me not to take hold of the slender poles—these supported the light roof, as I stepped over the carved low board that separated the prow from the passengers' seat. I eased myself down onto the red and orange embroidery of the wide spring seat. The boatman pushed against the wall with his heart-shaped paddle. At that moment, the man who had helped me ran along the rock rim by the wall, jumped on the back of the shikara without making it tip, and gave us a big push out into the water.

Tai said, "See, Akka, they are taking advantage of us already. We don't need two boatmen."

But at once the beauty of the scene, muted in the fading light, possessed Tai as it did me. The sky was still blue; the snow mountains, white clouds on the horizon. Hari Parbat, the fort, standing dark on its hill, was reflected as one with the hill, black in the water. The poplars, the spreading chinar trees now were dark masses of green seen doubled and darkened in watery images in Dal Lake. The water rippled gently green, the reflection of our shikara was a deep blue among the

green. I let my arm slide down. By leaning just a bit, I could trail my hand in the gentle water. I looked sideways at Tai and laughed.

"Tai, you are trailing your hand in the 'dirty water'!"

Laughing, she threw water up and up with her hand over and over again. "I'm just playing with the water, Akka, not drinking it."

The prow of the light craft lifted high out of the water as we glided smoothly with the even thrusts of our boatmen's paddles up Dal Lake into deeper shadows, until it was night.

There were no lights on the shore; the only sound was the splash of the paddles in the rippling water—the heart shaped paddles. There in the beauty of the lake at night in the fanciful shikara, Tai and I were lost in silence. I looked at her, a Hindu grandmother but lovely as a girl in love. Love had not gone with her husband; she had kept its flame in her heart. Now amid this romantic beauty I could see its bloom on her sweet face. The paddles stopped their gentle splashing and we drifted, still silent.

At last Tai said, "Akka, we must go back."

I coaxed her, "Tell the boatmen to sing."

She was reluctant and so were they, but at my urging they broke forth. Again we were laughing, gaily splashing water, teasing one another. Tai insisted she couldn't understand their song; their voices wailed sweetly. I knew it was a ballad of love. Undoubtedly it was something like the popular Kashmiri song "Across the river lives a boy with a bottom like a peach." Tai would never see, hear, or speak anything bawdy.

Tai had paid the extra annas that had been demanded for the two boatmen without a murmur, and we were still laughing when we walked into the lobby of the hotel. Two men, Moslems, jumped up, the manager tall with his fur cap, the second man, shorter, stouter—his height increased too by his caracul cap. They blocked our way at the foot of the stair, smiling

Holding their hands in front of them like opera singers, they cajoled; they swept us ahead of them into the lounge. Carpets were spread on chairs, were standing rolled on end. An eight year-old boy caught my eye. The hotel manager spoke a few fierce words; the boy cowered out of sight behind a chair; the short stout man was rippling one of the carpets. Ruby red, it was glowing like a jewel.

"Madam, see the incomparable beauty of this prayer carpet. It is one of a pair. Its mate is on the chair."

I could feel Tai boiling with rage; her emotions were high from our romantic ride, and this sudden Moslem attack, this forcing us to look at the carpets, had made her furious, but I was so overcome with curiosity that I gazed at the carpets and did not leave.

"Look, Madam, I have a hunting carpet." With a deft flip of his hands, he spread a pale carpet delicate with its animals.

I spoke quickly and bluntly. "Where did you get them? Surely they are not antiques."

He launched into a tale of maharajas having to sell to live; he had access to their homes; there would never be another chance for me like this—a pair of prayer carpets and a hunting carpet and more. He was throwing other carpets open to view, urging me to look, to feel them. *I myself would know that they were old; the hunting carpet had hung on a wall, so it showed no wear, and the prayer carpets had never been used on a floor. I drew back toward Tai, standing by the door. I murmured that it was late, I must go. I could not see well at night.*

The dealer was pushing close to me. "Oh, but under electric light you see the real beauty of the color."

I said that I did not want carpets, I wanted to see Kashmir shawls.

The manager pushed ahead of the dealer—"I will take you in the morning to my rug factory; there you will see shawls; there you will see beautiful rugs in the Kashmiri chain stitch."

I didn't answer, just said, "Good night," and followed Tai. The men came after us to the foot of the steps but said nothing more.

Tai did not speak until we were in our room and had the door closed, then she turned on me, "Akka, you are a fool. Now they know what you want to buy. They know that they can drive and push you. They will make your life wretched here, and you will have to pay a fortune if you buy."

I was too tired to defend myself; I knew that I had been foolish but I did not see the wily interlocking of all the merchants with our hotel manager until our stay was over. It was cold in our room; I lay there tense. When Tai finished her prayer and meditation, she came and sat on my bed. "Lie on your face, Akka. I will rub your back. The travel strain is too much for you. I will give you massage."

3

We didn't waken until Raj came to the room with our bed tea. He opened the windows and pushed the shutters out. It was pouring rain. Tai and I agreed on our luck, that we had had a dry day to come over the pass, and I said that we must buy some blankets; both of us had slept cold in spite of our coats spread on top of our bedding.

When we went down for breakfast, I looked over the rail, and thinking of last night was thankful that the manager was not at his desk. As we walked through the lounge, the carpets were gone but in the corner the rug was turned up again. This time there was something under it.

"Tai, someone is sleeping there."

As I spoke, the boy who had been in the room the evening before popped out; seeing us, he scurried away

like an animal. He was a handsome boy with fair skin, none of the marks of a servant.

The doors to the dining room were open. We entered, seated ourselves at the same table, Tai again throwing open the casement windows and complaining of the greasy smell. The cold and rain came in, and the sound of ducks quacking in the next yard. Again a long wait for the bearer. When he came he tried to close the windows. Tai did not let him close them, then she lectured him on being clean. He looked down at his tunic; he was proud of his uniform. To him, her complaints were senseless, useless; after all, he would have a fresh-washed, white, starched tunic to start next season. When, after more waiting, he brought our breakfast, Tai cried out at the eggs, "Akka, look at them, so small a pigeon could lay them; I bow my head with shame for my country; we cannot even give you enough to eat, Akka. The size of your eggs, people here would never believe." She sent the bearer for more eggs and demanded the fruit she had ordered the evening before. Four pears were brought just as we were through. We ate all of them, the bearer shifting uneasily about, realizing too late that two of the pears were to be for our lunch.

In the lounge, the rug was back in place, but when we went into the lobby, the boy in cotton shirt and pants was standing at the side of the manager's desk. The boy slipped around and down, out of sight behind the desk as the manager rose and came towards us. "My car will be here for you at ten to take you to the rug factory," he said, his voice warm as the room was cold.

I said nothing but looked at Tai. She looked back at me and said, "There is nothing to do but to tell him that we will go." And in a very low voice, "You have got yourself in this, Akka. Now there is no other way."

I looked at him and said, "At ten."

Upstairs, we found Raj waiting outside our door to see if we had errands or duties for him. He came in our room shutting the door after him. Raj never talked to

us without the door shut and coming close, and Tai never talked about the merchants, our purchases, money, without being near to me and speaking in a low voice. She cautioned me, if I talked in my normal voice. "Quiet, Akka. Walls, in a place like this, have ears."

I, in a low voice, asked Raj who the boy was who slept on the floor in the lounge. Raj, in a lower voice, said, "He is the manager's son."

"The child lives here? Where is his mother? Why does he, if he is the manager's son, sleep in a corner?" I asked.

Raj came closer, almost whispering. "This boy is by a lesser wife. He has not been put in school. We try to keep him out of sight. The manager strikes him at times, but as yet he has never beat him. The manager has a fine home at a distance. He goes there at night, but the wife there will not tolerate this child."

Once Raj was gone, Tai, her nose lifted in disdain, said, "That's the way Moslems are; the boy is bright and clever, but he will never have a chance because of the jealousy of this wife."

It was cold, and as I looked out at the lake, the rain beating down, the houseboats looked dreary, not dream-like as they had last evening, and I could scarcely make out the outlines of the fort on top of the hill. There was a knock at the door. Tai said, "Come." A thin tall old man in round white cap, dirty baggy clothes advanced toward me, holding out a bunch of dahlias. "The gardener with flowers for our room," Tai said, still critical, "but he will expect bakshish." The old man was standing with a sly smile. Tai got out her moneybag, dropped a couple of small coins in his hand, and he went away. "Bakshish, bakshish, that's all they look for," Tai said as she took the flowers and arranged them in a tumbler on the mantle. But she must have given coins enough to satisfy the gardener the first time, and continued to do so, for he brought lovely flowers all the time we were at the hotel.

We put our raincoats on over our wool coats and took our umbrellas, but neither of us had any protection for our feet.

The manager met us at the foot of the stairs. With him there was a five-year-old boy with dark hair, slight, dressed in the finest of well-tailored wool. The manager turned proudly toward the child saying, "This is my son." The little boy stood there, arrogant, silent. Tai looked at me. Both of us knew that this was the son of the favorite wife.

The manager led us out to the car; it was just at the step so we did not get wet, but it was an old car and the springs in the back seat sagged. The driver backed out the driveway, water, stones and mud flying. On the street, there was no traffic. We drove rapidly along Dal Lake, over a bridge, along a canal, over another bridge, into the center of Srinagar.

There were two- and three-storied brick and wooden buildings tumbling down on both sides of the narrow muddy roads. Once these homes must have been fresh and new, but Moorcroft recorded the same dreary decay one hundred fifty years ago.

The driver got out, opened a gate, drove us through, got out, closed it; we were in a large courtyard full of rickety buildings. He drove close to a two-storied one, but we had to walk along its length in deep mud before we reached an open stairway that led up to a two-roomed loft where we met another wily merchant.

There were shelves full of handmade Kashmir textiles and heaps of rugs on the floor. Chairs were placed for us at the end of the room; Tai properly sat down, but I roved around looking, in American fashion. The merchant was uneasy; Tai was already disapproving. Reluctantly I sat. He began showing room-sized rugs in chain stitch, pretty in a pale-flowered way, but of no interest to me. He could feel my indifference so at once used his big pitch. He had sold eight like this to a United States cabinet minister's wife. They were for her bedrooms, he said. Tai didn't help me in the least. She was not eager to have me spend my money in Kashmir with the Moslems.

I asked about shawls; he showed me a couple of scarves with scanty modern embroidery. I, downcast, said, "We are wasting our time here." The man then

took us into the second room. The walls were lined with rolls of carpets standing on end. Reluctantly, I sat down on a little settee with Tai.

The merchant grandly flung out a carpet saying, "This is our *Ardebil* design, one of our most popular rugs."

I was horror struck that the *Ardebil* carpet, the most famous of Persian carpets, should be reduced to this. Quickly I said, "Show me smaller rugs." My horror mounted as he began spreading the *Ardebil* design in small sizes and as he said, "In many color combinations."

Muttering I got up and began to turn corners down on the rolls to get a glimpse of color and design. "Do you have anything in red or green, reproduced in the exact size of the original?" He kept putting out roses and blues, but I had found a corner that was red. Disdainfully he put it down for me; it was a deep brick red, with a little green and orange. I dragged the details of the rug from him. It was a copy of an original mosque rug, four feet by six-and-a-half feet, a Merv Bokhara prayer rug, 550 knots per square inch. Bluntly I asked the price.

"Seven hundred rupees."

I tossed the rug, end up, on itself. "Aniline dye," I replied. "Come, Tai, this is useless."

The dealer was upset; I had betrayed knowledge of rugs and I was a possible buyer. How much did I know? How much could they squeeze out of me? Quickly he said, "Let me show you our dying vats; we dye our yarns here. Let me show you our looms."

The rain had stopped but Tai and I still had to pick our way in the mud. Under a roof with no walls there were vats and cauldrons filled with dye of every color and hanks of yarn hanging thick on poles. It was stunk and dirt at its worst. I couldn't pry farther into the dying process but I still thought the dyes were aniline. Adjoining was a high building, roof and slat walls, the slats nailed on with spaces between, the width of the slats. It was dim inside with the dark day and no win-

dows, but my eyes lighted to see rows of rug looms and weavers at work. There were two rows of looms, ten in each row. At each loom there were two or four weavers, their feet in dirt pits as they sat on low benches before the warp. They were thin, ill-kempt men and a few boys, their fingers moving fast as they tied the knots, threw the tabby, pushed them down with the comb, and started another row. Some had their section of the pattern pinned above their eyes on the warp; at a few looms a pattern master was calling off the colors and the pattern in a sing-song voice.

At the end of one row there was a weaver, hair white under his skullcap; he was small, frail in his old age. Beside him there was his replica, a boy perhaps seven, hair black, but face and body with that same frailty; their hands were alike, delicate, long fingered, flying with the wool knots. The rug that was growing under their skill was like silk, so fine, so perfect. The manager said that this was grandfather and grandson. The old man was their most skillful weaver; the boy already had the skill to tie the finest knots and work under his grandfather's direction. The rug they were weaving was much finer, more knots to the inch than anything else that was being woven in the loft. Some of the weavers stopped work and were staring at us, but the old man and the boy kept their faces toward the carpet they were creating, their fingers lightly, swiftly flying, playing a duet.

Tai said, "It is time for lunch. Akla." Outside, I told the dealer that we would come again. He tried to set a time; that I would not do. We walked through the mud, full of every kind of filth, to the car.

The rain had stopped but the air was chill, the high mountains vague gray cloudlike masses above the lower mountains that ringed the valley. Raj came to our room at once, told us that it was snowing in the high mountains, but that in a couple of days it would clear, and when the sun was shining we would not be so cold. Tai and I decided that we would shop again, this time without the manager directing us. First we would go to

the Government Central Market, Exhibition Grounds, then to the Kashmir Government Art Emporium, Residency Road. We could see displays of all the handicrafts and get prices that were supposed to be regulated by the government. Raj, our source of information, told us that prices would be low. Merchants were anxious to sell at the end of the season. Raj went on the manager's bicycle to get a tonga for us. He was favored to have the use of the bicycle, for bicycles were as scarce as cars in Kashmir.

Just across from the hotel, an elegant Kashmiri man was nonchalantly leaning against the stone wall at the top of the steps to the lake. He wore white wool trousers, almost hidden by his white wool shawl, one end hanging low, the folds curving around him, the other end thrown over his shoulder gracefully. He was tall, straight with a slender handsome face, the effect heightened by a white caracul cap, its slim fur high and softly rounded.

As we rode between Dal Lake and the row of houses, I looked at the houseboats, at the shikaras. I took quick looks at the side with the houses too. The place I had thought a wide green lawn between two houses, willows drooping down over it, was stagnant water so green with algae it looked like grass. Pushing about in it were several ducks. One bobbed his head down to feed. I thought the slime so thick he could not get his head up again, but he did, paddling slowly, contentedly.

When we came to the first bridge, three arches under it to support its weight, the central arch wider and higher, making the roadway come to a sharp peak in the center, I clutched Tai's arms. "Look, Tai, look!" Just at the highest point of the roadway, there was a youth about fourteen, garbed in a kimono-like robe of fine purple-red wool. It fell to the high tops of felt and soft leather boots, elaborate with embroidery, fitting like moccasins. A belt cinched the fine wool folds at the waist, the upper part of the garment billowing out, with a glimpse of brocade silk at the neck and below the turned-up sleeves. His skin had orange in its brown tones; his nose was flat, and his eyes had the Mongolian

slant. On his head he had a hat with brocade ribbon around the high crown, the rim lined with dark fur. There was the glint of silver at his waist, a silver belt with the handle of a dagger in a silver sheath.

"Where is he from?" I was still clutching her.

"Oh, Akka, you make so much fuss over everything."

"But where is he from? He is so strange. Is he high-born?"

"The lad is from Ladakh," Tai said. Just then two tall and burly men came up over the crest of the bridge; they were dressed in similar fashion but their robes were dirty brown coarse wool, their boots heavy—no silk, no silver—rough knit caps on their heads.

"Some Ladakh family," Tai said, "has come down over the pass to sell wool and to trade in Srinagar. This is the son of a wealthy Ladakh merchant. They have let him walk out to see Srinagar; he has two servants along to guard him."

We had turned down the road by the canal with its row of shops. A big sign on the second floor of one of the wretched buildings proclaimed in big letters: "Cheap John." Below it read: "Papier Machie, Wood Carving, Shawls and Embroidery, Etc., Etc."

"Look, Tai, the sign says shawls; let's stop there after we have been to the government shops."

Tai made no promise, just said, "Srinagar is full of merchants; we will be hounded to death to buy."

We passed men pushing heavy loads of lumber on low, small-wheeled carts, women with huge baskets full of produce on their heads. Tongas, the few cars and huses were for tourists; the pushing and pulling, the carrying of loads was done by people. The men pushing the lumber were bending low, straining at their work, but as I watched they stopped to rest. All the other Kashmiris were idling about, a few ragged small boys darted about, and the pariah dogs yelped and ran as they were kicked. I wondered about the logs and lumber I saw trundled with such effort through the streets. I did not see the least evidence of repair work or any building any place in Srinagar.

We came to the new part of Srinagar; houses were far apart with walls, trees, and gardens. The English had left their mark here; all the many years they had occupied India they had used Kashmir as a summer resort. We found the Exhibition Grounds on the outskirts, with a wall and turnstiles. The tonga was left outside, the wallah already down pulling grass for his horse. I had noticed that it was common practice as the tongas stood waiting, for the wallahs to pull the grass growing everywhere and make a pile for their horses to eat with the natural result that the minute the horses started, they began to break wind. Inside, we found a large open rectangle, with grass beaten down by many feet. Buildings were scattered about, empty halls used for exhibits during fairs. During the season, school children appeared in athletic contests and as entertainers in the open space. In one corner there was a small closed square of buildings. Tai and I walked in through the arched entrance to find a small bazaar. It had a center of trampled grass with tiny stalls crowding close to one another, the continuous roof coming out to cover a walkway. There was not a crowd, just a few Indian men and women sauntering along; it was indeed the end of the season.

The first stall had saris hung from ceiling to floor like rainbows, shelves and counters piled high. I was eager to buy Kashmiri silk. Tai held back and I could tell that I had hurt her. I had made the mistake of saying that I wanted to buy a sari for her. I had been thoughtless in my blunt, direct ways, careless with Indian feeling; you make gifts on special days, on departure, on journeys; the times are set and ceremonious. I asked Tai to help choose a sari for me, something suitable to make into a dress, and as we looked, softly I pleaded my American ways, saying, "You are my Tai, my sister. An American can buy for her sister anytime, but help me buy a sari now." I wanted her to choose for me so that it would be selected with the Indian eye for color and design—not with my American taste. Tai was edgy, her stomach was troubling her, but soon she found

a soft gray-blue sari for me. It was an allover design, a conventional flower marked off in squares by tiny elephants. Then I softly threatened her, "If you do not choose, I will do it for you." Still grudging, but wasting no time, she selected a sari, a white ground with a wide border, clear green and a small amount of red in quite a large pattern of elephants. I wondered if my talking of the Emperor and his elephants coming over Banihal Pass was in her mind. But Tai liked elephants just as much as she despised and ignored monkeys.

Now we walked along looking in the stalls. Each of the merchants was up in one motion from his comfortable lounging or sitting on some of his wares on the white cloth-covered floors of his stall, when he saw me, the American customer. They called out and held up the things they had to sell for me to see. The first place we saw wool material, we stepped inside. A small, bright-eyed old man was waiting on us. He had a tight little black cap on his head, his face was so dried up you thought of a raisin; his eyes twinkled out from his wrinkles; his wool tunic and trousers were quite clean.

He kept bringing us long shawls without pattern, wool pieces, not pashmina, although they were fine wool. I wanted something warm and heavy to keep the cold out in the night. I kept saying to Tai, "Tell him blankets; surely they don't keep warm at night in their clothes; they must have some kind of blankets." Tai kept talking to him. He left the pile of soft woolen shawls on the floor in front of us and brought another pile. They were blanket size, heavy coarse black wool, a warm red stripe at the sides, goat wool but very warm.

Tai, I could see, did not approve; she wanted to buy only fine things, but when I said, "Think how my grandsons will love these for camping when I get home," she yielded, but added, "You must take one of the fine pieces for a dress. The merchant says the wool is natural in color." She was holding up one, a dark, rosy beige. I agreed and said, "Ask him how old he is and if he has a happy life." His face wrinkled into smiles and his story tumbled out, Tai translating for me as he talked.

He was past eighty; his wife was still alive and just as active as he was. They had had the terrible misfortune to have no children, but they had had the good luck to have a nephew, a brother's son, who came to live with them when he married. He had always been like a son to them and he had had children that were like their own grandchildren. The nephew and his wife asked for his advice always and he was able to help them. "See, now that the season is almost over, my nephew does other work. I keep the stall open. Tonight I will tell them of this good sale." He took out of his pocket a little printed card. "See, that is my name on the top line. That is my nephew's name underneath."

Our arms were weighted down with the heavy wool but we walked all around the square, looking, not buying. Outside our tonga was waiting; the horse was chewing a few wisps of grass sticking out from the corners of his mouth; his sides stuck out. I knew he was bloated with the greenery and would offend Tai as soon as he was whipped into a trot.

At the hotel, Raj came out to the tonga, helping us, carrying our big parcels. He was alive with curiosity, his black eyes snapping. Tai sent him for our tea. I wanted to open our parcels and ask Raj if we had paid too much. Tai always refused to "higgle." She never said "haggle." She knew the quality and price of Kashmir saris and felt that we had had a good buy with their asking price. I put the saris away, but I left the wool package out. The old man had pleased me so much that I would have given him any price he asked. Raj was back almost at once with the cup of hot milk for Tai, my tea white with milk, sticky with sugar, and a double amount of biscuits.

"Open the parcels, Raj," I said, and I told him how much we had paid. He tossed the black wool blankets that pleased me so much on the bed with never a look, but he kept the soft wool shawl in his hand, turning it, feeling it. We had paid plenty, but it was a very good piece.

"It is a man's shawl," he said, "they are buying them

now for winter, prices are down now that the season is over. May I show you how to wear it?" Without waiting for an answer, he put it about himself, as a final flourish throwing the end over his shoulder. He posed like a fashion model, turning about. He looked proud and handsome, but he didn't have the elegant ease of the young man in the white wool and white fur cap on the lake steps.

"You can take your money from us and buy one," I said.

A dreamy, distant look came into his eyes. "I will be in Delhi this winter. When I go down there I will wear a Western coat."

After he was gone, Tai said, "Akka, you must not tell prices. Didn't you see the manager's eyes when we came in? He will force out of Raj any information we give. Both of them will be trying to locate the merchants to get a cut."

4

I was awake as early as Tai the next morning. We had slept warmly, with the black wool blankets. I put up our windows, pushed out the shutters. It was gray in the sky, gray on the lake, but the rain we had heard pouring down in the night had stopped. I pushed as unobtrusively as I could to get us dressed, through our breakfast and on our way to Cheap John's.

"Where shall I tell the tonga wallah?" Raj said as he got us into the high seat, our weight sagging the back of this tonga down.

Tai said, diplomatically as usual, "We will go several places."

The driver cried out at his horse, snapped the whip and we were away, mud splashing the sides. When we pulled off the narrow asphalt strip onto the mud in front of the shop with Cheap John's sign, the wheels of

the tonga settled down; and Tai and I sat there for a few minutes. There were steps up to the shops. The one we could see into had an assortment of brown clay bowls and plates. Children were scurrying; there was a little uneasy movement among the men. All of them had a bulge in their middles.

"Look, Tai, those men can't be pregnant."

She answered, "They have kangris under their robes and shawls, fire pots. You have one in your home."

I thought of my precious copper Chinese hand warmer, with its patina and its hand-cut grill, then back to Moorcroft I went: "Against the cold in winter the Kashmirians usually carry under their tunics an earthen pot with a small quantity of *livé* charcoal, a practice that invariably discolors and scars the skin, and not unfrequently occasions palsy."

"What are we waiting for, Tai?"

The name "Cheap John" had not been said; we did not think anyone had been sent to tell him, but at that moment a thin, yellow-skinned face topped with a dirty turban looked in under the top of our tonga. "Welcome to Cheap John's, ladies," he said, shivering although he had on a wool jacket. "Come ladies, I have the best paper mesh [*papier-mâché*] in all Kashmir." He didn't offer to help us; but turned his face away as we scrambled down into the mud. "Follow me." Tai for once was forced to hold her sari up; she was grumbling as we picked our way through the mud and the filth; for herself, she would never have gone to a place like this.

Cheap John turned at the corner of the store, down an opening, a lane between two buildings, not wide enough for a tonga. At the side a door stood open, he started up the steps of a narrow, winding stair. I hesitated; the treads were narrow, the risers high, there was no handrail. Even with my gloves, I was not willing to touch the broken plaster of the wall, and the whole stair looked as if it would fall with our weight.

"Come, lady, just a few good steps and you will be in my shop," urged Cheap John, looking back.

"Go on, Akka," Tai said in a cross voice.

So up I went. At the top there was a step down into a small room, the floor covered with a reed mat. The floor was so rickety I thought that I was going through it, but I took another easy step to let Tai in. Squatting on the floor were two Kashmiri youths.

"You see the whole process of paper mesh here," Cheap John said. "We use cotton rags, turned into a rag paper. This is pasted on molds, dried, cut off the molds, ground smooth by hand." One of the young men held up a wooden mold, and the white form of a box that he had just cut off from it. The other lad was painting, his brush having only a couple of hairs. With deft strokes green chunar leaves appeared, and a kingfisher, brilliant blue. Cheap John was puffing as he explained, "All the painting is free hand, with genuine stone paints, then we use the best varnish. All our articles can be washed in soap and water."

Tai was bending over watching the quick strokes of the brush. The young artist took up a fresh white box; quickly his brush made it bloom with sprays of pale pink almond blossoms. "Come, Tai," I said.

The door was open into an adjoining room. We stepped up onto its wooden floor. It was dim, filled with a faint strange odor. Two double rows of crude tables pushed together filled the center of the room, covered with papier-mâché boxes of every size, color, design. The walls were bung with plates and trays; bowls and boxes were heaped on the floor; along the length of the side of the room toward the street there was a low seat. Back of it was a row of windows, shutters tight closed. Squatting there was Cheap John with a hubble-bubble pipe. He was drawing in long slow breaths. He took the mouth piece out as I stood staring at him.

"Madam, my breath is short. I have not had my first pipe of the morning. Look at my lovely wares. My men will show you. Soon I will come and sell you." Like jinni, two young men appeared, dim shapes in the dark room.

I began looking at the papier-mâché articles, at once entranced with the intricate painting, the soft coloring.

but it was evident that there were two styles of painting: the fresh charming work such as the young artist we had watched was doing, and an old style, darker with much detail, archaic figures, not just a few quick strokes, but hour upon hour of fine work.

I as usual asked, holding up a piece, "Is this old?"

Tai whispered, "Now you have sent the prices up."

I whispered back, "I will bargain."

Even I could see that Cheap John, while he was slippery, was an opportunist.

Tai was coughing, half-choking. The air in the room was thick. I said, "Please open the shutters." The young men fairly shuddered in horror. "My friend must have air and I must have light to buy," I insisted.

Cheap John with the prospect of a good sale so late in the season gave a half-hearted order. The young men crouched up on the low seat; the shutters had been closed for the winter. They struggled but got them open. The cold air outside came in with a rush. I had got out a cough drop for Tai, but she was impatient with the situation. I began gathering boxes, piling them on the seat under the full light of the window—a large round box in dark brown with polo players, reminding me that the game of polo is supposed to have originated in India. A notch made you put the cover always in the same place so that the players on the sides were in exact position; a dark green box with cocks, a black box with the fine lines of shawl patterns done in gold, a tray with crocodiles pushed by men with poles up an endless turning canal. I went to the wall and took down two large plates, fourteen inches in diameter, pale green with delicate vining flowers. The young men were distracted; Tai was angry at me. This walking about, looking, lifting up, and bringing with my own hands was hard for them to bear. At least I did have my gloves on so that Tai could not say, "Look at your hands, Akka. They are dirty."

Cheap John now was taking just an occasional draw on his pipe, his head was forward, his eyes half-shut. I began asking prices. My voice was flat and loud. Cheap

John lifted his head, looked up and began to bargain; his voice was high with a whine. Twenty-five rupees for the tray with the crocodiles. That was five dollars, an impossible price. All the prices were out of reason. I gathered a heap of new boxes; I had promised to buy some for a friend. These prices were lower but I kept going back to the old pieces. Cheap John would protest that they were old; no one could do that fine painting now, but he came down a little. At last I had him list the articles, new on one sheet, old on another, then I demanded a cut on the separate sums. He gave me ten rupees off on the new pieces and seventeen off on the old. Quickly I counted and figured; I tried in vain to get him to throw in a little oval tray in faded pink. I was still paying tourist prices but I closed the deal, arranging for him to ship them to the United States.

Cheap John was up and out ahead of us; his good sale had roused him from his pipe; he was urging that I write back and order more. Tai was cautioning me on the stairs; they were harder to get down than up. The little lane was a mire and at the corner we had to stand waiting while Cheap John shrilled and clapped to get our tonga over to us. The wallah had pulled up on the edge of the tar strip and proposed our walking to him. Tai was saying, "These Kashmiris are impossible." I had brought one box with me in the pink-lavender color that Tai adored. She knew that I had selected it for her but this was no moment to present it.

Tai ordered the tonga to the Bund. There we had to climb out and up a steep stairway to reach the principal shopping center of Srinagar. Just at the corner there was a shop. The front display was of wood carving. "Let's look, Tai." Inside she was at once intrigued with a houseboat about ten inches long. It had elaborately carved shutters and doors that opened. I bought it quickly before Tai could protest, but wondering why Tai's liking was so evident for this replica when she would have nothing to do with real houseboats.

A few steps along the Bund out on the canal there was a floating shop on a houseboat, with a big painted

sign "Suffering Moses"; a couple of narrow boards led out to the boat. "Let's go there, Tai." Again it was a houseboat but I knew that she would like teetering in over that gangplank.

At the first sound of our feet on the wood a slick young man, wearing Western coat and trousers, black hair oiled back, came out to meet us. Tai had me by the hand, steadying me. The canal water was green with duckweed and there were ducks gobbling it. Inside we found the length of the boat filled with the handicraft of Kashmir, a confusing display of carved wood, tables, embroidery, papier-mâché, rugs, everything.

"What would you like to see?" The young man, pleasant, businesslike, spoke English well.

"Shawls," I said with a question. "Old ones?"

"Our new ones are sold out; there are no old ones for sale."

"Rugs," I said and allowed myself to be seated beside Tai while he brought them.

The young man began spreading the rugs, wool chain-stitched on wool material, pale alpine flowers in pinks and blues and lavenders, leaves of soft greens, placed among curving scrolls copied from Kashmir shawls.

Tai spoke, "On the wall, Akla, there is a much finer one."

The young man said dubiously, "It is twice the price of the ones I am showing."

Tai spoke imperiously, "That is the kind of thing she wants to buy."

Quickly he took it down, while we took delight in it. It was paler in coloring, wool so fine, stitches half the size of those in the other rugs, packed twice as close together. The young man went back into the office at the end of the boat and came back with two more delicate beauties. I wanted all three, but they did not go together in color or design, and it was too much to spend on one kind of thing. While I looked from one to another, the soft talk of the salesman went on. The other rugs were made by a number of men working to-

gether, but these three were made by single artists. They would not take orders; they worked when they felt like it, sometimes not more than a couple of hours a day.

"Tai," I said, "what do you think? I fancy the one flushed in pink. That will be my gift for Ellie, my granddaughter."

The young man was explaining that the scrolls that made the center were the Shah Jahan design, and the border was made up of the flowers, birds, and animals of Kashmir. The rug was utterly charming. I asked and paid the price including shipping without bargaining. This transaction suited Tai, but she still felt that I should have bought the largest of the three for myself; it was in larger Kashmir flowers; it had been a winning exhibition piece. "Tai," I said, "I can't have everything even if I do want it."

The "Suffering Moses" shop had accepted traveler's checks, but I had paid Cheap John in rupees. We passed Lloyd's Bank and I proposed changing more traveler's checks into rupees; Tai agreed that I would need rupees on the mountain trips. She would mail our letters while I went into the bank.

Outside Tai was waiting, looking across the canal at the row of bungalows. "See, Akka, the third big one. That is where I lived with the Gokhales when we spent the two months in Kashmir."

Tai and I walked on to the end of the Bund. We were going to the Kashmir government Art Emporium. Down steep steps and we were on Residency Road and close to the big two storied building. It was like an exhibition hall with rooms devoted to each kind of ware. Tai and I wandered about; there was so much of everything and the government clerks did not seem eager to show or sell. There was a long rack of dressing gowns in fine embroidered wool, Tai made me try some on. Their skirts were circular, sagging with hanging and handling. I confessed that I would like a dressing gown but not these. "We will have one made for you," Tai said, I didn't reply but thought of all the

complications that would bring about. We looked at swords that sprang out of canes at the touch of a button. The canes were carved, the swords stout. They would delight my grandsons, but they were too dangerous for boys. Tai reminded me that I would have to get special permit to get even a knife over six inches long out of the country so I passed the swords and bought knives just under the six inch length. Their handles were carved of deodar wood; their blades, too, sprang out at a touch. The salesman proudly told us that the steel in all the blades was from old automobile springs.

One whole end of the top floor was devoted to silver. Shelves and tables covered with white paper displayed silver, shiny white silver, chased and engraved in patterns, scrolls from the shawls but mostly the chinari leaf. There were trays, goblets, jugs, scent holders, cups—all quite lightweight. The ornate style did not please me and Tai was urging me not to trust the Kashmiris but to buy silver down in India. We were worn with all our shopping but Tai wanted one thing here. She wanted saffron from Kashmir to season and color some of the elaborate cooking for Diwali. Just at the front of the wide stairs we found the counter. It seemed like a lot of rupees for a small parcel but Tai looked at it beaming, had me smell it, admire its golden yellow. The clerk was assuring her that the Kashmir government guaranteed it pure. "It is almost impossible to buy saffron that has not been diluted in India," Tai explained. "It takes such a tiny bit of this, and the flavor and color is so wonderful."

Just back of the counter there was a room with baskets. We had been so careful with our buying—nothing large to carry, we would say. But Tai wanted and bought an enormous willow hamper. "We will carry it down full of English walnuts. They have wonderful ones in Kashmir and this is the season for them." I wanted to get a nest of five baskets. There would be one for each of the daughters-in-law and the three granddaughters. We were laughing at ourselves now. I added a child's willow chair and regretted they had only one.

We had to wait for a tonga. When I said that we should have kept the one we had, Tai said, "This way is best. Now the hotel manager can only find out from the tonga driver about Cheap John and that he brought us to the Bund. He will not know about the rug from Suffering Moses or that you got more rupees from Lloyd's."

• • •

Raj came in with our tea. He set the table between our two beds and we sat on the edges of them. It was late in the afternoon; there had been clouds and rain all day. It was cold.

"Why can't we use kangris, too, Tai?"

Tai replied, "Of course, we can use them—like braziers—Raj!"

Raj always brightened when Tai got our her money-bag. She didn't need to tell him that there was a big pile of kangris, clay pots in their wicker baskets, heaped up for sale just as the road turned at Dal gate. Raj held back a little. His words were roundabout, for he could not imagine ladies like us with kangris holding them close to our middles under our clothes as the Kashmiris did. Tai clapped her hands, said, "Go, Raj," and he was off and back almost at once, ashes and glowing charcoal from the kitchen in the two kangris. At first, I put my hands around the delicious warmth, then Tai put them under the table, covered it with my wool blanket, and we sat one on each side roasting our cold legs in the cosy nest. Warmed, we felt amiable and clever.

When we went down to dinner, the food brought protest from Tai. The chicken tasted of kerosene, the vegetables were a green pulp, and we had English pudding, a lumpy bit of liquid without flavor, for dessert. Out in the lounge, up jumped the stout wily merchant of the prayer and hunting rugs. His heavy round fur cap sat low on his forehead, shadowing his dark face.

"Madam, I have brought shawls for you to see. Please sit down while I show them."

Tai stood there silent, but I knew she was furious. She had told the manager that we would look at no merchandise in the hotel. I said with timid entreaty, "But these are shawls, Tai."

The merchant, well aware of my weakness in the matter, was quickly untying his parcel, and spreading on the backs of chairs a half-dozen shawls. One was square, the others long, all had black centers. The light was too dim for me to judge the fineness except by feeling; all were eighteenth century, of only average quality. I asked the price at once, holding up a corner of the square one.

"Four hundred dollars." He surprised even me.

"The long ones?" I asked.

"Around six hundred dollars." His dark shiny eyes were fixed on me like a snake's.

"Impossible!" I cried out. "I can buy Kashmir shawls in the United States for one-tenth of that." I turned my head away. "What a fortune I would have at home if I could sell my shawls at that price." My eyes caught a glimpse of orange color in the folds of the wrapping cloth lying on the floor.

I stepped over and picked it up. It was just a piece of a shawl but fine, old weaving, soft as silk, and an unusual color for a shawl. I threw it down without looking at it. "Why do you bring rags like that?" I said. "These shawls are common. Haven't you something really good?"

He began a long palaver; the shawls had come from the palace of the same maharaja as the rugs. They were treasures; old Kashmir shawls were gone; there were none for sale; only by the rarest luck did he have these. I said that I was tired, and that it was too dark to see, and started out of the room.

As I passed the orange shawl on the floor, I said "How much for the ragged piece?"

"Eighty dollars," he said, his voice getting a little high and eager, but we moved right on.

By quick movement, the merchant got himself between us and the door, addressing himself to Tai,

"Madam, will you and the lady come to my home, for dinner, tomorrow? It will be my pleasure to serve you lamb cuscus, all our special dishes. Then, I will have goods to show the lady that will please her." To my surprise, and consternation Tai accepted the invitation, and we swept out of the room.

"Tai, how can we eat what they have to offer?"

"Akka, this is the way they do things. If you are to get a shawl, we must go through this. We can taste and there will be fruit that you can eat."

Upstairs Raj was in the hall beaming. "I have just filled your langris with fresh coals and put them under your beds." Tai and I pulled them out and cuddled them to us for a few minutes, I speculating on their setting fire to our bedding. Tai laughed me down.

"Every Kashmiri we have seen has a fire pot under his robe, and we have seen no flames."

5

The next morning when Tai and I came out from breakfast, the hotel manager was up smiling, intercepting us. "Ladies, the tonga is waiting to take you to the tailor's."

Tai said, "We are not ready," and up the stairs we went as the manager sighed, his high fur cap quivering with exasperation. Tai whispered to me, "You see, the hotel manager is in on everything we buy."

Upstairs, Tai sat down and wrote a letter. I looked out the window, up at the ancient fort, dark against the sky, then down at the houseboats on Dal Lake. Merchants in small boats were all around them. I could see vegetables being held up, and embroidered cloths; and I saw the flower boat, a frail shell, the stern down in the water with the peddler's weight, the bow high in the air with its lovely arrangement of blooms, a solid mass of pots with yellow chrysanthemums and high

stalks of maroon dahlias and deep blue delphinium. Shikaras were around the steps, the boatmen smoking their morning bidis. The elegant Kashmiri in white lolled at the top of the steps. In the garden, in front of the hotel, the gardener was cutting flowers. A tonga was by the hotel steps.

When at last we got in the tonga we trotted beside Dal Lake. Kashmiri men lounged along the wall, sleeves dangling, their arms out of them holding kangris close to their skin under their robes. Kashmiri women, tall and handsome with baskets and children, were loitering along. The tops of their heads were covered with long white scarfs, flowing down their backs. Intricate silver earrings dangled almost to their shoulders. Some of their dark wool robes had elaborate embroidery at their "v" necks but the hems were uneven, hiking up in the front and in the back, dragging at the sides the sleeves turned back showing the dirty muslin liners. I could see the tight cuffs of trousers and sandals on some of the women but most of them had bare legs and bare feet. They were casting side-wise glances at us in the tonga.

We turned at Dal Gate, over the stone bridge into the old town. There was a row of houses between us and the canal that the road followed. The buildings seemed empty of families, as if they were work shops. The tonga stopped; we got down, and Tai and I picked our way up, in peril of our lives, as on all Kashmiri steps. We came into a bare upper room where a man met us and led us into the next room, oblong, with reed mats on the floor, furnished with shelves, a few small trunks and some skeins of silk and wool hanging on the wall.

This merchant, his fur cap roughened with wind and wear, was a mountain man with none of the flattery and insidious manner of the rug dealers; he was a trader. He urged us into a couple of broken chairs and began showing us pashmina. I selected the best of the lot, knowing it was not top quality. He called; the tailor came and began at once to measure me.

I wanted a simple coat-style housecoat, skirt length. The merchant opened a trunk and began showing embroidery for pattern and color. He had a flaring robe in kingfisher blue, brilliant; Tai admired it, but I wanted alpine colors. He took out a silk sari with wide embroidered border and palu to show the colors. I was charmed with its beauty and I knew in that hidden way whereby two people know one another's thoughts, that Tai thought it lovely too, and desired it. Now the merchant called the embroiderer. Both the tailor and the embroiderer were lively little old men; the embroiderer, steel rimmed glasses on the end of his nose, began pulling pale pinks and pale blues and lavenders from a tangled skein of silk threads. He would swiftly do a flower, a leaf, a scroll, then cock his head up at me, his eyes twinkling, for comment. He was full of delight; this last minute order when the season was over was something extra.

The trader took from one of the shelves a bolt of silk for lining. It was handwoven Kashmiri silk. At once Tai asked the price per yard, and asked him to cut off ten yards, telling me that in India she could have suits made for her grandsons for Diwali. I seized the opportunity and bought the embroidered silk sari—without any bargaining—saying, "Tai, you too must be dressed in Kashmiri silk for Diwali." I asked the cost of the housecoat. There was some going back and forth in price. It was not a bargain, but it was a pleasant transaction. The trader merchant was a firm character.

Our transaction was over but I asked, "Don't you have any first quality pashmina?"

The merchant opened another of the trunks and lifted out two fleecy clouds of wool, one tinged with gray, the other pure white without a hint of color. These wool pieces were not bleached—they were natural color. The merchant walked over to me, holding them up, letting the perfect one drift down onto my lap. Here was the beauty of the white caps of the high Himalayas, not in the distant glisten but the close softness of snow. This was my dream of pashmina from Kashmir. I knew be-

fore I asked that the price would be high, but I didn't realize that it would be as high as a Himalayan peak.

Quite casually he said, "Five hundred American dollars for the pale gray; seven hundred and fifty for the white."

I held up the length. "They are five yards long, about fifty inches wide. At that price, who will buy?" I asked. Bargaining was out of the question with this material and this merchant.

Nonchalantly, he replied, "New York buyers will come."

Tai was urging me to buy half of one of the pieces for a dress. "Tai," I spoke firmly with her and doubly firmly with myself. "Some things have to remain dreams."

Outside, we found our *tonga*. Beside one of the bare buildings, a woman had set up a box, covered it with skullcaps and hung them back of her on the carvings of a closed wooden shutter on the wall. She was squatted behind the makeshift stall waiting for customers. "Stop the *tonga*, Tai. I want to buy."

"Akka, you don't want those caps, you can buy them anywhere."

I had found by disappointing experience that in foreign traveling you must buy at the moment. The article you see on every native, you may have only one chance to purchase. "Tai," I said urgently, "my grandchildren love caps." Tai reluctantly stopped the *tonga* and got down with me. There was no one in sight but the woman, but by the time we walked the few steps back, women in burquas, dirty white cloaks flowing full from round fitted skullcaps, embroidered slit eye holes, ragged children, and pariah dogs appeared from every where, tumbling over themselves and over us to crowd around the little stall and see me buy.

"Akka," Tai said in her schoolteacher's voice, "this is no place for you, buying on the street."

Hastily I picked up four caps, embroidered in fine stitches. I paid the asking price, quickly. I could hear the indrawn breath of the crowd at the outrageous

amount I had handed out without a word. I hurried after Tai. She was already walking toward the tonga, her small body stiff as it always was when she was displeased with me. I hadn't noticed a narrow street, too narrow for even a tonga, that veered off sharply. But as I hurried after Tai, that too added to Tai's anger for she did not approve of my walking, except with a slow and stately tread, looking straight ahead, unseeing under any and every circumstance. I almost collided with a boy, a seven-year-old boy, shrilling on a flute held to the side of his mouth in such a graceful manner, his fingers curled out in such a lovely pose, they might have been the hands of Krishna. His dark eyes were dancing with mischief and after him pranced two companions, making a little procession. They stopped still, dark eyes widening, at this sudden sight of an American woman. The music ceased, but the little leader held his flute, one hand to the mouth, the other hand far at the side, palms forward, fingers raised and curled, like Krishna's.

• • •

Back at the hotel I began dreading the visit to the rug and shawl merchant. Tai said, "The merchant will not offer food at once. He will show you the shawls and press you to buy. If he succeeds, the meal will be joyful and relaxing, but if you have not bought he will still be palavering, trying to get around you."

"Is it all right to go into these places to buy, Tai?"

"Don't have foolish fears, Akka. That is the way business is done here."

But to myself I thought how remote we were in the loft rooms that morning when we bought the dressing gown.

When we came down the hotel manager was smiling, telling us that the tonga was waiting for us, but behind the smile, cruel sharp lines were deepening down at the sides of his mouth, and his eyes were pinpoints. Once in the tonga, I questioned Tai.

"What was the matter with the hotel manager?" Tai shrugged her shoulders and said, "Moslems are that way."

At Dal Gate, we turned and crossed the bridge again, into the old town. We trotted along through narrow street after narrow street twisting, turning: the high brick and stone walls of houses two and three stories high, all with closed wooden doors and shutters, now shut us into the strange scene. I felt eyes peering out from the carved grilles at the windows. The streets were a maze, and we drove on and on. At last the tonga drew up sharply at a wooden door, closed, with no knob. The tonga wallah indicated that we were to get out. Down, I took hold of Tai's arm.

Just as she said, "Don't be foolish," the door swung open. A young man, dark and lithe, in a skullcap, stood there. He said nothing, but as we stepped in, Tai ahead of me, he bounded away up the stairs and out of sight. We followed up, the steps broken but shallow and wide, curving around. Up a short flight, we came to a corridor. Two wide closed doors seemed to lead to the main floor. On the other wall were the remnants of carved screens, door-size. One was completely gone, and we could see out into the tangled overgrown remains of a lovely garden, a stone parapet nearby, below that, wide water flowing so fast we knew it must be the Jhelum. Beside the garden, the wall between broken, was another house.

Tai urged me on. Slowly we climbed more wide, tumble-down steps to another corridor, this one with walls closed on both sides and again closed doors. There was no light. I held tight to myself to keep from shivering. We heard quick running steps, a door flew open, almost hitting Tai. Another young man was there, his eyes shiny in the dim light. He said nothing, but again bounded up more stairs. We followed; this time the steps were narrow, the treads high, still no rail. Tai put her hand back to help me. We came up into a tiny hall, from that into a bare room.

"Tai, this must have been a princely house long ago, but now it is dismal, falling down. No one lives

here." I was becoming frightened. We stood there waiting. A door opened. The young man, his face in tight lines, bowed low.

We entered a low rectangular room, light sifting in from carved wooden screens along one wall. Rolls of carpets on end lined the walls; the floor was thick with carpets. In the center of them our host, the merchant, was standing, rubbing his hands together, saying, "A lovely day to have you ladies come to me." I could see strong cords in his fat strong neck; his black fur cap was low on his dark brow and the sparks in his eyes were not pleasantries.

He indicated two armchairs, but I walked over to the one open screen and, looking out, said, "Your house is on the Jhelum." I was looking down three stories from an overhanging balcony to the varied life of the river below. I could see that this was one in a continuous row of houses overhanging the water.

Tai said, "Come, Akka."

I sat down uneasily. The dark climb up in the ruined mansion, the sinking feeling of my swift look down into the swirling water (the heavy snows and rains in the high mountains were flooding the Jhelum), and now this dim room with the dark merchant. At his right hand and at his left hand were the young men; thin shouldered in their dark clothes, they seemed like two steel springs ready to be released.

The merchant, with a wave of his hand, had the men rolling out carpets, worn, with poor colors. I said nothing. His voice grew a little harsh. "Madam can see the beauty that I have to offer and at such prices." He went on and on. I thought that I must let him show the carpets or I could do nothing about the orange shawl. I complained of color, of size, and I was quite flat about the poor quality.

"But you wanted old carpets, Madam. I will show you the new carpets I have to offer." His voice began to rasp.

Pressure was increasing on me. I said in a low voice, "I do not want carpets. I came to look at shawls."

He began to rant. "Madam looked at carpets at the

hotel; she admired the carpets. Madam scorned the shawls."

Tai was silent. I did not know how to wage this battle, and fear was creeping over me, but again I said, "It is shawls that I want to see."

The merchant's voice roared out in anger, "Go to my brother-in-law's house and fetch the shawls!" One of the young men sprang away. The merchant did not speak again but stood silent in a glowering rage.

I looked at Tai and said, "I will look more closely at the carpets." I moved about the dim room, pushing at some of the carpets with my foot. A row of curtains hung tight over the opposite wall. Going close, I swung one with my foot. I had just a glimpse of another bare room. I went back, pulled my chair close to Tai, and began to murmur to her. "What is this? There is no sign of luncheon. He seems evil, threatening."

"Sh," Tai cautioned.

The tension tightened as we waited silently. We didn't hear sounds from the stairs, but suddenly the door burst open. The young man, empty banded, came close to the merchant and spoke in a low voice. I drew closer to Tai. I thought the merchant was going to strike the young man, but instead he seized a carpet, flung it out right at our feet. "This is the rug Madam must buy. It is the one you admired, the one you selected at the hotel."

Astonished, aghast, I looked down at a blue carpet. Indeed it had been shown at the hotel. Fear was tightening my throat, but again I spoke. "I do not want a carpet. I do not have the money."

The merchant came close, his face powerful, sinister; he was bending low, looking directly into my eyes. "Madam can write a check."

I was on my feet in an instant, my heart was pounding, my lips dry. "Come, Tai, we are going."

The man's voice was almost a scream. "But we have prepared luncheon for you!"

Moving as swiftly as I could across the tumbled carpets, I managed to say. "I can't eat luncheon with

you." One of the young men was by the door, I was close before he stepped aside. I was running now. Down the stairs and through the corridors I plunged, Tai after me. The door at the entrance was caught shut with a leather thong. I jerked it loose and tumbled out into the street and up into the tonga and burst into tears. Tai put her arm around me, saying, "Akka, Akka, quiet."

The tonga wallah had been dozing, but he started the horse when Tai spoke sharply. Then Tai was quick and sharp with me. "Akka, control yourself. The hotel manager must see no sign of tears. You must walk in calmly with your head up." She pulled out her own handkerchief, put it to my eyes, coaxing me, as a few tears still slid out. I took a deep breath and gathered myself together.

The hotel manager's face was black with rage as we walked into the hotel. He did not move from his desk. Up the stairs we went as if we had not seen him. He was gone when we went down to dinner. Tai was still coaxing me away from my fright and into anticipation of our first mountain trip.

6

When I looked out our windows the following morning, misty gray fog hung over Dal Lake. Raj had filled our kangris with charcoal embers after he brought our bed tea. It seemed dismal for a trip into the mountains, but this was the day we were to go to Gulmarg, meadow of flowers. I sat on the edge of the bed, making no start at dressing, hugging the fire pot. Tai began pushing me, for the bus left at 8:30.

When we went downstairs, the manager's unacknowledged son was still asleep under the corner of the carpet in the lounge, and there was no sign of breakfast. Tai pushed the casements open; the cold moist air swept

in over the stale greasy smell. The previous evening the kitchen staff had been informed of our early departure, and Raj had told them again an hour before when he had got our bed tea and the coals. At last, the bearer, smelling of the whole summer's grease, brought our boiled eggs and fruit. Tai was irritated and I was uncomfortable with weather, food, and Kashmiris.

It was an hour before we went out on the front step. The tonga we had ordered was not there. Tai stepped back into the lobby, calling Raj, in full voice. He came running, hopped on the bicycle which was kept on the front porch. When the tonga came, the horse was ambling, chewing grass; the wallah was slumped over, looking as if he had slept sitting in his seat and was not yet awake. Raj helped us in; Tai spoke some sharp words to the wallah. He gave a sharp cry to the horse, a sharp snap to his whip, and we were off.

Out on the road, I, as usual, looked out at Dal Lake, up at Hari Parbat and the sky. "Tai, the snow mountains." I spoke softly as if my voice might disturb the returning sunlight. Clear and shining above the fort, high above the blue-green mountains, were vast mountains white with snow. My eyes began to follow the circle of the sky. All around the green vale, above the ring of blue-green mountains, there were high craggy peaks, their tops glistening white with snow, snow filling the deep crevasses below. This was the lovely dream of Kashmir, this vale with its gentle beauty of lakes and trees and flowers shut in by mountains green with forests, and high beyond, so far away they did not threaten, were the snow peaks, majestic, shining in the sun.

I did not like leaving the dream when our tonga stopped under the chinar tree but we got down and crossed the street to the Government Transport Headquarters. Here we found again the hustle and bustle of arrival and departure. The motor transport centered here was a link between my noisy new Western world of rapid movement and Tai's easy moving in the habits of hundreds of years. Little boys besieged me to polish

my shoes, but Tai swept me on and into the bus; it was almost full, and we started almost at once.

We had been promised "an excellent metal road" for the twenty-seven miles, but I was fretting about the three miles from Tangmarg to Gulmarg that would have to be covered by foot, dandi, or pony. It disturbed me when our arrangements were not made ahead. The bus was full of people who would be competing with us for transportation, but again Tai said, "Wait, Akka. I will manage; you will see."

The bus was chugging along, climbing on a road rising among trees. We saw farmers' houses built of wood, fields, and stopped a couple of times at little towns, clusters of tall unpainted buildings with bark roofs overrun with grass, all of them in utter disrepair. But mostly there were just the lovely trees and streams.

The bus moved slowly along, shaking on the hard road, scenery flowing by outside, when suddenly we jolted abruptly to a stop. En masse, the passengers were on their feet pushing forward out of the bus. I got up and out into the aisle, but Tai was gone and I could only move forward slowly with the crowd. The way suddenly cleared as I came to the bus door, but I was still being relentlessly pushed forward. To my consternation and horror, I was shoved down the steps and out into a milling mass of horses. Men were at their heads, but I seemed to be at the horses' rears, their feet flailing out. The men were yelling at me and grabbing at me; the horses were snorting and kicking. I was screaming, "Tai!" Suddenly, I found myself high on the back of a bony white horse, and there across the struggling mass of horses was Tai, also on horseback, calling to me.

"Tai," I screamed. "Get me down. I won't ride on this big old horse."

"Akka," she screamed back. "You can't walk, you have to ride."

My voice was desperate. "I will not ride this big horse. I want a fat little pony." By this time, Tai's

mazdoor (man to lead the horse) had pulled her horse over to mine. I got my leg over the saddle and slipped off. I was so stubborn now that the horses pushing me on every side did not frighten me.

"Pick out a pony!" Tai yelled.

It was almost impossible to hear in the confusion and almost impossible to tell one horse from another, but a pony came near. I pushed to it and grabbed the saddle. By magic, almost, that mazdoor had me on its back, and Tai and I were being led out of the mob of horses, the man with the high white horse following, yelling for money. I had learned to ignore such demands.

In moments Tai and I were out from the confusion and we could talk. I was shaken, but Tai calmed me, telling me that she had hired a guide as well as the two mazdoors with the ponies. The guide could speak English well; we could talk to him and he would keep the mazdoors from rushing us up the mountain. Our pony-back ride from Tangmarg to Gulmarg was only three miles but we would climb 1,700 feet; Gulmarg is almost 9,000 feet.

The Indian passengers were passing us now on horses and ponies. They had walked from the bus back to the pony station and had bargained for their mounts. "Come, Akka, we must not be last." Tai slapped her horse on the rump. He broke into a gentle trot, the mazdoor running beside her. My pony lurched forward to follow.

I screamed, "Asta! Asta!" The guide seized my elbow on one side, the mazdoor on the other as I swayed, almost falling. Tai looked back and slowed. The trail was narrow and steep, switchbacks like the road over the pass, but it was hemmed in by trees so the fear was that the horse would stumble and fall with the loose rock under its feet rather than that we would go over a precipice. Tai would never admit fear of snakes but I knew she was deliberately avoiding a stop in the woodland. At every level stretch, she would urge her horse into a trot. When my pony followed, I screamed with the jolting.

"I have to get off and rest, Tai. I can't stand it any longer."

"Akka, you have to endure to get there."

But the guide said, "Soon we will be halfway; then there is a place to rest."

The guide kept by my side, talking constantly, telling of expeditions he had been on, of the wonderful English masters he had had. "Did you know the American expedition that climbed K2?" I asked.

"Yes, yes," he said. His answers were glib and fast. Sometimes the guide sang. When I asked the song, he told me, "I sing because I am happy. I am guide today for an American woman."

At times when there was a long series of rising switchbacks, both the mazdoors and the guide would leave us and go darting up the mountainside, stones crashing down from their feet. At the top of the switchbacks they would be waiting. Tai saw to it that the mazdoor was at the bridle, the guide at my side when we went up ladder-like inclines. The mountain air was thin, and the fat pony was hard under me. I kept calling, "Tai, I have to get off," but they kept me on till we came to a wide green crest. Once down, I still had to hang to the guide, my legs were trembling so. Indian men were trotting by, urging their horses faster. Tai had the dash and daring for a quick ride. My slow pace irked her, but once we were on our way again, I begged to have the pony walk. He was Bulbul, named for the sweet, bright blue bird of Kashmir. Bulbul, a pet name, seemed appropriate as his bulbous sides bumped my legs.

The heavy pungence of the tall evergreens (Himalayan silver fir grow 200 feet tall) was overpowering in the thin air. I was breathing fast, but our guide was panting so hard that I was holding back Bulbul as much for his sake as for my own. Tai accused the guide of using a hookah. The guide dropped his head like a schoolboy and said yes, once in awhile he used a hubble bubble pipe. Before the day was over he confessed that he had used the hubble bubble till his breath was so gone that expeditions would no longer hire him. In the last minutes of the climb, I felt gone too, but suddenly

there was a sharp, wide rise. Tai again slapped her horse. Up he went fast with Bulbul and I, the mazdoors and the guide digging feet in after her.

At the top, we came out onto a level glade. We had reached Gulmarg, and it was a meadow of flowers. The grass was full of pale Alpine blooms. Log houses, their low roofs close to the meadow, seemed a natural part of the scene. *Bordering the open green, silver fir, spruce, blue pine, and a few horse chestnuts formed an undulating green screen, sheltering the gentle common from the rocky harshness of the high mountains on every side, mountains with peaks white with snow, snow streaking down the granite sides like white rivers.*

The road led us along by a stout fence. Tai stopped her horse, and my pony scratched himself on the fence, pushing my leg back and forth on the pickets. Tai swung off her horse with grace, but it took effort and help from both the mazdoor and guide to get me down. We were in front of Nedous Hotel, a long, low, unpainted structure, a porch across the front, rooms opening out on it. The guide opened the gate and went in with us, the mazdoors going on with the ponies. Some distance ahead, ponies were tethered in a circle, cropping the long green grass, the mazdoors sitting on the ground around them. A brook spread itself in the grass in front of the hotel; we stepped on stones to cross it. Tables and chairs were on the grass and Indian families were sitting there. Tai and I had decided when we planned the trip not to stay overnight; there was a bus back from Tangmarg at 5:30 P.M. Indians came to Gulmarg, *for vacation, but most of them traveled up and back in a single day. Since the British had left, Gulmarg was almost deserted. The houses we saw were empty; the hotels deserted. Golf was offered in the travel folder, but we could see cows grazing on the fairways. I remembered reading in *The Happy Valley*, published in 1879, that a cricket and croquet ground had been most artistically laid out on the green and level surface in the center of the meadow, and a race-course*

marked out with posts and rails, with sundry hurdles and artificial ditches.

We went into the hotel, Tai making arrangements for a meal at once and for tea in the afternoon. Tai asked if we might use the toilet. Directed to the back, we followed a rough little path, followed in turn by a couple of big geese, till in the middle of the rear of the hotel we found a cubicle with a commode but no water. The geese were hissing outside and going back we had to skirt them carefully. At the dining-room door, Tai began shouting "Bearer" and a servant appeared, and at last came back with a pitcher of water, pouring water on my hands, then on Tai's.

Our meal was to be served outside. Tai and I sat down to wait; the guide was sprawled in the grass nearby. "Why is he here?" I whispered.

Tai answered quite loudly, "The guide is acting as if he is at our service, but what he is really after is what is left of our lunch." The guide rolled his face lazily toward us, smiling.

An Indian woman in a dark silk sari (Tai and I were both in cottons) hitched her chair over to us and began to talk. Her husband was dozing in a chair; a young girl was sitting beside him, her sari silk too, her nose too large and her eyes close together. The woman chattered along, not in English, but Tai once in a while uttered a monosyllable.

"What is she saying?" I said, in a low voice.

"Oh, she's going on and on about her lovely marriageable daughter and what they have to offer with her."

I wondered whether it was the thin air or the wrong caste, other times Tai had had lively visits with travelers.

When the food came, Tai put her chair with its back to the woman. The curry was, as usual, too hot with red pepper for me to eat, but there were rice and pears. Tai urged me saying, "Eat, Akka. Don't save for him," but when we were done, there was still a good amount of

food. Tai put everything from the serving dishes into one bowl and handed it down. It seemed only a few swoops with his hand and he was done, and Tai was ordering the ponies brought back. We were going up to Khilenmarg, three miles on and two thousand feet higher. I was thankful that I had a fat pony; when I got up on him my rear was already sore.

The road wound through the meadow, the little flowers blooming thick in the heavy grass. We went into the dark green woods and up. There were many sharp ascents; we were in a damp and gloomy evergreen forest, ferns growing among fallen trees and rocks. Indian men, gay on their holiday, were passing us, their horses spurred on with slaps and shouts. The ride did not seem hard or long as I talked with the guide. There was a spectacular view of the Himalayas from Khilenmarg, I knew. As usual I spoke too openly. "Is there by any chance a view of Godwin Austen, K2?" If it was clear, the guide assured me, I could see it, but clouds were piling up; it was doubtful today. I wanted to believe that I might see K2—so much I wanted to believe it—but Tai called back, "Now that you have named it, of course he will point out a peak as K2." But I had not told the guide that the son of friends of mine had lost his life in the ascent of K2.

The trees were small now, stunted, and we came out on Khilenmarg just above the tree line, immediately under a lofty ridge of mountain. High above we could see deep solid snow, and snow came down in a deep ravine just over our heads. We were off our horses, Tai joining the men, scrambling up to get handfuls for snowballs. We could see the undulating green of the valley below, but clouds were boiling around the high peaks. At once the guide led me out and pointed.

"K2 is there. We must watch. If the clouds clear, you can see it."

Tai was standing by me. She said, "Nanga Parbat is the peak you view from here."

The guide persisted, "Yes, there is a close, wonderful view of Nanga Parbat, but if you know where to look, you get a clear distant view of K2." The clouds

were heavy. I turned back and said, "I want to pick a few of the flowers." Tai walked with me. The blooms were small and frail, their stems just an inch or two long; they were smaller, shorter, paler than the meadow flowers at Gulmarg. Lavender, pink, blue but so delicate—I picked just one of each.

Tai said in a low voice, "You want to see K2 because of your friends' son." It was not a question but a statement full of the sympathy Tai felt for sorrow. We moved slowly. The thin air did not let us breathe deeply. Tai was watching me, asking, "Do you feel dizzy, Akka?"

"No," I answered, "I feel a lightness, I feel as if I am dreaming." I didn't speak my thoughts. They were with Arthur, the young friend of my own lost son, Eugene—my son falling in a plane in the war, Arthur falling in this eternal snow and ice. My son fell for liberty, but Arthur lost his life for that intangible urge upwards that seizes men. Mountains were poetry to Arthur, an enticing rhythm in the singing winds, an inaccessible beauty in the glaciers; he had to scale the icy peak.

The guide called, "Come, come quickly!"

My head was still lighter now with excitement. It seemed as if I were flying, not walking. The guide stood, his arm extended, his finger pointing. I was poised, waiting, watching.

"Keep looking. When the clouds boil like that, there is a chance that they will part."

Suddenly it happened. K2 was there, distant, such a distant snow peak. The thought of Arthur filled me. Just as suddenly the clouds came together. Tai was standing back of me, her arms holding me.

We rode silent under the dark overhang of evergreens. When we came out below in the meadow it was cloudy and the air was chill. The little main street that led past our hotel branched, and I could see a row of shops. "Tai, let's see what they have to sell."

"No, there will be nothing here, just what the residents buy."

I persisted. "That is what I want to see."

Tai reined her horse up short and slid off. "Akka, you are impossible."

I said, "Can't we ride the ponies there?" Tai did not speak again, and I slid off my pony.

We walked the short distance up the road. The shops were empty, all but the last one. Up high steps, we could see at the level of our eyes two men squatted, sewing. When I started up the steps, Tai said in a stern voice, "Akka, that is a men's tailor shop."

"I will ask for woolen material," I said, persistent and stubborn now that she was holding me back.

We were just inside, when in bounded a big black dog, a Doberman pinscher, fat and shiny with food and care. Dragging behind on the stout leather leash was a servant. In quite a loud voice I asked for woolens.

The larger, older man was up from the floor, looking at me over his steel-rimmed glasses. "The dog has come to have his winter coat fitted, Madam. The woolens are there. The dog is the magistrate's dog."

Tai and I were relieved to turn to the narrow shelves that went from floor to ceiling. Both us were choking down laughter. In front of us there was bolt upon bolt of fine wool. I looked at the printing on the end: "Made in Italy." Now we had control enough, we were turning to see the dog have his fitting. A stout man in heavy wool Western clothes had puffed up the steps. His cap was the finest of black Persian lamb. The tailor was squatting beside the dog, putting over his back a cherry-red coat with heavy interlining. It was bound in black and had a strap of fine black leather across his chest and two straps under his body. The Doberman had a big rear end and sloped narrower towards the front, but the coat was tailored to an exact fit. The tailor in his tight black skullcap was looking up over his steel-rimmed glasses with an eager, imploring look at the magistrate who had his lips pursed. He spoke to the dog, the servant in thin cotton pants and tunic, moved the dog about. The magistrate gave a quick jerk of assent with his head and puffed off. Tai and I looked at the high pile of Italian woolens while the tailor carefully unbuckled the red winter coat.

"I don't want to buy Italian wool in Gulmarg," I said, "Let's go." So we followed the dog and servant down the steps; the Doberman was running fast up the hill, dragging the servant behind him at the end of the leash.

Tai and I walked, laughing. But soon we were hanging on to one another. Exertion and the thin air was making us so dizzy that we could hardly move. Tai began to slow up and say, "Akka, Akka, don't fall down. I should have kept the ponies." It seemed a long way to the hotel, but it was really not much of a distance, and soon we were sitting in chairs by a table, Tai was saying, "Bearer, tea," and the guide was grinning up at us from the grass. The Indian woman was at us once again, offering cakes. Tai took them, then made me eat them saying, "Eat, Akka, there is so little for you."

When we were through and had rested a little, Tai said that we must start back to Tangmarg, so that we could take our time.

I groaned when I climbed up on Bulbul, but it wasn't so bad once we were going. Tai had been peppy, but, as she said, it was her habit, and I knew she was doing only what she thought best for me. Going down, the road didn't seem so steep, and the green fragrance of the evergreen made me go back to the magic moment on the mountain when the white mystery of K2 was clear before my eyes. Tai was ahead of me and the guide was running by her side. I could tell that he was importuning her. When we reached the halfway clearing, Tai waited. When I was beside her, she said, "The guide tells me the ponies are leased out to one man. He is a hard master. Anything we give at Tangmarg will be seen and claimed by him. The guide wants us, if we are going to give anything extra, to give it here so that he can keep it. What do you think?"

"Please, Tai, give generously. I had my wish. I saw K2."

We got off our ponies and walked out the ridge. The mazdoors were following, leading the ponies; they wanted to share too. The sound of a horse came, not all the Indians had mazdoors, but this one did. The guide

cautioned, "Don't open your purse; don't let him see us talking." Tai and I walked to the rim. When the guide said, "Now," Tai had the rupees ready. Quickly she put them in each of their hands, not letting them see what the other received. Up on Bulbul again, all at once he seemed precious. Just these few hours, but he had carried me till I was high in the mountains, eleven thousand feet, and had my glimpse of a faraway snow peak.

The rest of the way down the mazdoors plodded along, but the guide was leaping and singing. "What are you singing?" I asked.

"Oh, I'm singing that I took an American up the mountain today, I showed her K2—a rich American woman—and now I have rupees in my pocket. I will go home tonight with many rupees, and we will feast, for this winter we have some extra rupees to buy food."

Tai's mazdoor was walking beside her, and mine was walking beside me. I could tell that their words were begging. "What do they want?" I asked the guide.

"Jaggery for the ponies, money to buy jaggery, brown sugar, for Bulbul."

Tai called back, "Pay no attention, Akla. This is the way it is; once they have something, they want more."

The mazdoors went back to the bridles when we came to steep places in the trail, then they were back at our sides with soft whining. "Tai," I called, "Please, for Bulbul." Tai was bolding herself stiff; I knew she was irritated again.

Tangmarg was a bare, dusty spot. The bus was there drawn up by a little rest house. A few Indians were waiting, but we were early down the mountain. Off Bulbul, I patted his fat sides. The mazdoors were holding out their hands. "Please, Tai, please."

"Oh, Akla, what a child you are. Come, but we will buy and feed it ourselves."

I stumbled after her, over the rough stones in the road till we came to the few poor stalls. There among piles of rice and grain was a broken pile of jaggery.

"A rupee's worth of jaggery," Tai said.

The merchant had *no bag*, so we stretched out our hands and he heaped them full. Back of us were the mazdoors with the ponies. I put a piece in Bulbul's mouth and Tai began feeding her pony. The mazdoors had their hands out entreating.

Tai looked at me sternly. "See, Akka, if we had given them the rupee, the ponies would never have had a bite of jaggery. It was just a way around us." Bulbul was nuzzling, almost taking the jaggery out of my hands; brown saliva dripping out of his mouth. When the horses were done, Tai clapped and whisked her hands together to clean them. "Oh, Akka, you know so little of the ways of people."

Back at the bus, the door was open; we got in and rested till it started. Down the mountain we rattled and shook on the metal road, but the gentle dusk, the night coming on, green in the heavy shade of the evergreens, was pleasant.

7

We didn't talk about plans for the day at breakfast, but going upstairs, Tai said, "This morning, Akka, I want to paint Hari Parbat, the Pathan Fort, as we see it from our bedroom window, and this afternoon we will go to Shalimar. Sunday is still a holiday as it was under the British, and the fountains will be on at Shalimar."

I lay down on my bed and began to look at the guidebook. "Here it is, Tai; Shalimar Bagh and back, tonga fare 6 rupees, 8 annas first class." I looked blandly at Tai. I could always gain her attention by saying first class. She despised my curiosity to see what second and third class were like. Tongas were listed with the note: "First- and second class tongas can carry four passengers and third-class tongas only three."

Tai spoke decisively, "We will go by shikara. Shalimar lies on the lake's edge. Be quiet now and rest."

I read to myself: "More or less on the Dal Lake end,

only a few miles from the city is the Mogul Garden of Shalimar, 'The Abode of Love.' Framed against the background of the hills and commanding a fine view of the lake, the gardens are a feast of colour from spring to autumn. With their majestic chinar trees, this garden is a favorite picnic spot." My thoughts, however, were in the days when Jehangir created Shalimar for his beloved wife, the famous Nur Mahal, "Light of the Palace," and when his son Shah Jahan built the magnificent black marble pavilion for Mumtaz Mahal, the "Lady of the Taj."

Shalimar was a dream to me, a dream evoked by a song—

"Pale hands I loved, beside the Shalimar,
Where are you now?
Pale hands, pink tipped, like lotus buds that float
On those cool waters, where we used to dwell."

Shalimar, the Shalimar of the Kashmiri Love Song, how many times I had sat on the octagonal rim of my own pool, its jet of water tinkling as it fell, trailing my hands in the water and saying, "Are my hands pale?" My husband knew my dream of Shalimar, and would laugh gently. I would make my own answer. "My hands are brown with the sun, and my fingernails are grubby from digging in the garden." He would laugh again, but he had built for me a pool, and its little fountain threw up sparkling drops.

After dinner, Tai insisted that I rest again. "Sleep," she said, but I knew that she was timing the occasion. The sun would not be shining full down for our view of Shalimar; it would be late afternoon and we would walk in the garden in the dusk with its mysteries. Tai at last started to dress. She did not advise me what to wear, but when she put on her fine blue silk sari with pink and red carnations brocaded on its filmy length, I put on my French silk damask suit. The ancient emperors were long gone, but we were dressing for the garden they had created.

Across from the hotel, we walked down the stone steps. It seemed romantic to get in the shikara, a palanquin that would lightly skim the lake. We lay back on the embroidered cushions, both of us trailing our hands in the water. The heart shaped paddles made light music with their splashing. Up through the beds of lotus the shikara carried us, far up around the circle of the lake till we came to pilings where a number of shikaras were tied. We climbed out on the stones and crossed the road, but still we could see no garden. A gatehouse two stories high was before us, steep steps at each side. Women in gay saris, a few men, some in turbans, some in Nehru caps, were coming down.

Tai and I climbed the steep steps, the last one rounding the corner of the gatehouse. Shalimar, Shalimar, lovelier than any dream was before us. Water spraying up, falling into a wide cascade of rippling water, waterfalls splashing down four gentle terraces, water singing a lovely song. We looked up through the misty water, up to the black marble pavilion, mysterious under tall ehinar trees. All this beauty springing from a soft green mountain going up and up behind it. Above, the sky was blue, and high up and far away, just visible, were the snow peaks. We walked slowly along the wide green path, I bemused. Shalimar was a water garden, a long cascade of sparkling drops, water in many moods, dashing over waterfalls, spraying in the air, rippling in a shallow stream.

Tai said, "Careful, Akka," and I stopped short. I had almost walked against a gardener, grizzled, tall, and thin in dirty tunic and baggy trousers. He was holding out to me a nosegay of white roses. My hands went out for it, but I looked at Tai. She was opening her money-bag.

"It's all right, Akka. The gardeners are allowed to offer flowers."

The gardener now drew his hand from behind him. He had a nosegay of pink carnations for Tai.

Just beyond the wide green paths there was a full blooming border of flowers and beyond, grass again,

water garden. The last ones out, we slipped down the steps of the gatehouse, over and into our shikara without words. The shadows of the willows and the poplars edging the lake were heavy on the water.

"Tai." I whispered, "Have the boatmen sing." She spoke and their voices rose, soft and sobbing. They were singing of love long gone.

When we awoke the next morning, the lively life of the river had already begun and many boats were going down to Dal Gate, loaded high with vegetables—some with green fodder—to be sold in Srinagar. As quickly as we could manage, Tai and I set out in a shikara to see the floating gardens.

The day was clear; the snowy mountains looked down on the lower green mountains, the green mountains looked down on Dal Lake, and our shikara rode through the reflections of soft white and gentle green, the lotus beds with their thick green pods part of the green shadow. Tai wished that we could have seen the lotus bloom. The pink buds and blossoms must be a lovely sight, but to her they were more than that—they were a sacred flower and to Tai a high moment was the opening of the lotus bud. Now the seed pods stood high from the water, so numerous above the stately leaves—leaves so numerous that they formed a green carpet, a textured carpet.

Mingled with the lotus there were water lilies with small pads and little yellow blossoms. Over on the green carpet, a Kashmiri woman, squatted in the stern of a tiny skiff (like a shikara, a half-moon shape, but one-fourth the size and without canopy) cutting the water lilies for cattle fodder and throwing them back of her into her boat.

Tai halted our boatman, after we were around the curve of the lake. She wanted me to look at the arched bridge, part of the artificial causeway extending completely across the lake. The bridge was in good condition, but the causeway looked unused, ruined. Wakefield, writing in 1879, supplied the name of the cause-

way, "Sutoo," and the name of the bridge, "Naividyar," and the information that "this is the picturesque and elegant stone bridge of three Saracenic arches built by one of the Moguls."

The arches were so low—the level of the lake was up with the seasonal floods—that I feared the canopy of our shikara would hit, but we glided under and on about a mile. Now there were thick sedges and reeds; our boatman pushed us in among them. There was a waterway between the thick aquatic growths, but no opening was visible to our eyes. Tai called to the boatman to stop; she had seen a kingfisher, small but brilliant blue. Soon one perched on a reed near us. Down he dove into the water and came up with a minnow. We looked down. Below in the tangled mass, tiny minnows were near the surface, and farther down were larger minnows. Dragonflies whizzed by, perching near on the sedges. We seemed alone in the greenness, but we could hear distant voices calling.

The boatman pushed rather than paddled us on; we came out where the water was more open but covered with green slime. Here there were flat boats with several men to each boat, each with long poles, turning them like cranks in this shallow lake bottom, and lifting up dripping masses of long creeper and muck. This they dumped in their boats, piled high with their morning's work.

The boatman spoke to Tai and she in turn said to me, "We are entering the floating gardens"

As far as I could see there were little islands, rectangles one yard by ten yards or more long, anchored by stakes in parallel lines with narrow aisles of water between them. The men were poling one of the flat boats just behind us. Just in front of the row of islands there was a mat, a muddy mass of tangled reeds. The men, using their poles, began to pile the gathered muck on it. They were making a new island, a century-old practice. It was late in the season but the gardens were full of bloom and fruit, big cucumbers and melons like

elongated cantaloupes. Our boatman talked to Tai and she relayed on to me that the floating gardens are sometimes stolen.

Our boatman poled our shikara through a wider opening between the floating beds and we found ourselves among real little islands, these made by the lake people by a crisscrossing system of canals. These islands too were gardens, full of squash, tomatoes, and vegetables of every kind. Then we came to a group of islands covered with bloom, small rectangles of plots with tangled rows of dahlias, sweet peas, carnations, and snapdragons, the source of the bouquets sold from the flower boats.

Again we heard the sound of voices; we could see nothing but greenery about us, but when we came out into a more open bit of water, a finger of land came down into it. Behind willows and poplars pressing close were several bare wooden houses, two stories high, the upper story without walls, that space being used for storage of crops. They looked deserted but some children were playing about on the bare earth. We guessed that their mothers were out gathering water lilies on the lake, their fathers selling vegetables in town or making more floating gardens.

As our shikara moved on, we seemed in a lost world. The houses were away from civilization; there was nothing but greenness about; we were drifting in a shifting mass of gardens. We came out to another spit of land. Out on it, three sides surrounded by water, there was a small open shop; a woman in one of the tiny boats was pushed up to it, holding up a two-year-old girl. A man was putting a bracelet on her little arm.

"Tai, this is the place for me to buy Kashmiri earrings and the head piece to hold them." A chain device goes across the front of the head; a hook holds a silver plaque in the center of the forehead; the chains come down to the ears and help hold heavy earrings.

As our shikara pushed up, the woman quickly drew her baby down; the merchant had not let go of the

bracelet and he pulled it off as the child was drawn back to the mother. At once, the mother paddled her skiff away out of sight. Our shikara pulled up to the shop. It was high above our head, but we could see two men in back making jewelry: heating, pouring the silver into molds. The man in front made no motion to show us anything, but jewelry hung thick above his head. I feared we had angered him by driving his customer away, but Tai said, "They shop for jewelry from the moment a girl child is born. This woman probably looks at jewelry every day and buys, perhaps, once a year, on some auspicious occasion."

Our attention was caught by a larger boat, a man in the prow, one in the stern, a cow fastened with a rope standing between them. Tai began at once to bewail. The sight of a cow between two Moslems was too much. "Alka, Alka, those Moslems are taking that cow to be slaughtered. Look at the innocent frightened look in her eyes. Oh, that I should see such a sight." I didn't know what to say; Tai's love of cows was part of her age-old religion. Before she had time to suffer more, the boat poled up to an island covered with grass; the men fastened the boat to a stake and one man began pulling, the other pushing the cow out onto the island. Tai and I kept looking at the pleasant sight. The cow in the boat had been carried not to slaughter but to pasture.

Now our shikara pushed out from the islands, through a wide band of floating gardens, through a band of sedges and reeds to another open stretch of water, green with tiny water plants. Far over, alone in the quietness, a woman squatted in her tiny boat, a wooden rake in her hands, lifting up the harvest of green from the water to her little boat.

Then we were out in the lake and soon under the three-arched bridge, the heart shaped paddle of the boatman driving our shikara through the smooth water. It was a relief to be out where we could see far and wide, there was a green closeness, a secret far-away life back among the floating gardens that was alien to my Western mind.

Years before, Wakefield made the same remark Tai did on our return from the floating gardens. Briskly she said, "The usual time for visiting the city is the afternoon," but after our noon meal, she made me lie down. How I hated resting when Kashmir was outside my window. As usual, I shut my eyes to please her, but I thought about our coming ride by shikara. We were going to travel the whole length of Srinagar on the River Jhelum, under all the seven bridges. Across from our hotel we would get in the shikara on Dal Lake; we would go through the lock at Dal Gate, into the river Jhelum that wound its way like a snake through the city. I remembered Moorcroft's writing: "Most lakes in the vale drain through a complex net of canals into the Jhelum River. The water in the lakes comes from streams rushing down the sides of the Himalayas." Our travel guide called Srinagar the Venice of the East, lying five miles along both sides of the river, and built up along all the canals. Moorcroft, my bible of Kashmir, described Srinagar as lying on either bank of the Jhelum for about four miles. Srinagar seemed to me just as he had described it 150 years ago.

Tai scorned hiring a guide and our brochure had just a few lines of description, just a general map of Kashmir, none of Srinagar. So I lay on the bed pretending to sleep, but going deep in my memory of Moorcroft for details. I could remember that the canals were faced in stone derived often from the ruins of Hindu temples, the sculpture on which is turned inwards. And I could remember that the trunks of deodar trees and these stones were used for the construction of the bridges.

Tai said rather sternly, "Akka, are you asleep? Let us start; it is quite a long journey." She went to the door and called Raj. When he came running, Tai told him to bring a boatman into the entrance of the hotel

and tell him we intended to make the river trip under the seven bridges.

By the time we were down, the boatman was standing by the steps. He looked like a duck out of water, disturbed and out of place. Tai started on him about the trip rate, since the trip was not quoted in the rate table we would have to pay by the hour and Kashmiris are tricky unless you have agreed on rates. The boatman, I could tell, was raising strong objections; this I thought, was the usual quarrel over rupees, but when we started after him down the drive, he waddling from side to side, water was his element—boatmen seldom set foot on land—Tai began telling me the dispute.

"Akka, we are going to have to hire four boatmen. The sunshine we have had the last two days has melted snow from the storms in the mountains, flooding the river Jhelum. He insists that it will take four boatmen to handle the boat in the current."

Tai lightly skipped into the shikara, but Raj gave me his hand, deftly helping me make the steps into the frail, tipping craft, holding my wrist until I sank down on the embroidered spring seat. We were riding again in the "Good Luck," but our boatman was not having good luck in getting the two extras; the usual second man was perched already on the stern of the boat. The boatman was going from man to man squatted on the stone steps. Raj had joined him.

At last Raj came to us, "You will have to pay more. They say the river is in flood, and they will not go for the usual rate."

Tai began to argue, but I said to her in a low voice, "We want to go so much and this is the only time. Pay what they ask."

"Akka, that is your trouble with these people. They always want to squeeze you and you let them." She argued for a minute more with Raj, then gave him the nod and two of the men came from the stone steps, running along the pilings. They gave the shikara a violent push, jumped onto the stern; down it went with the weight of four men, up went the slender prow, and out we glided onto Dal Lake

Our boat was not idling along as it had been on our pleasure rides, but Tai looked back and told me that only two boatmen were rowing. We were going in the opposite direction too from our pleasure rides. The lake was narrower. There were still houseboats along the bank; they were parked one after another like cars and they were plainer, more businesslike craft in which Kashmiri families live. They did not have the sun deck with awnings on top and the doors and windows were not carved.

We entered the lock at Dal Gate and waited. At last the water level was adjusted. Tai fretting at the delay. Out of the lock, we were in the Mar Canal, gliding along between banks of huge old stones. Tai reminded me that these were the stones from Hindu temples destroyed by the Moselms. Above, high ruined old houses were almost falling down on us but they were falling down just this way in 1819, according to Moorcroft, so I felt they would not crash on our heads, but as in that day there was still danger of the slops being thrown on us. The canal was foul: it was the dumping place for all refuse.

We came through another lock out into the Jhelum and under the first bridge, the Ameerî Kadal. The bridges were similar in construction and just as Wakefield described them: "formed of trunks of deodar driven into the bed of the stream with quantities of stone and rock dropped around them. The foundation extends beyond the shaft and presents to the current a pointed extremity. It is also filled with heavy stones to prevent its being carried away. These form the supports for the foundations of the bridge, composed of alternate layers of stone and the trunks of Himalayan cedar trees. On these again are laid the upper timbers of the bridge, forming the road which is covered with a layer of earth, with the addition of a railing on either side."

We could glimpse the poplar avenue as we went under the bridge. Now we were in a wide piece of water, the Jhelum River, with both banks crowded with houses. We tried to decide which balcony we had looked out from on our frightening trip to the rug merchant,

but life on the river was so lively it caught our attention. Moored close by the bank were doongahs—large, long, flat-bottomed boats, fifty and sixty feet in length, nearly ten feet in breadth. They were roofed by matting supported on a wooden framework, with side curtains of the same material. Here, it was very evident, families lived their whole lives. Women, good looking and smiling, were half-hanging out the window openings in the matting, washing copper pots in the river or dipping up water, all the time in shrill gossip with their neighbors. Naked little boys were swimming about, and on some of the boats, on a flat balcony on top, a man lolled enjoying a hookah. Some women were throwing slops into the river.

Too soon we came to the Habba Kadal, the second bridge, which long years ago had a row of wooden shops along both its sides, overhanging the water. These had burned down and had never been rebuilt. I was watching for Fati Kadal, the third bridge; just below it, on the right bank, is the Shah Hamadan Mosque, built of Himalayan cedar without nails or screws, one of the most celebrated mosques in Kashmir. It came in view, a square, low, pagoda like building, the several roof projections going up to a square belfry topped with a steeple bearing on its point a golden ball, instead of the usual crescent.

It did not occur to Tai that she was ignoring the mosques in the Kashmiri scene. Kashmir was to her Hindu, the others alien Moslems who converted by the sword. She did not withhold legends about the Moslems; her tales from her elders and her studies in Sanskrit simply did not include them.

She said nothing against mosques, but we did not visit a single one, and she managed always to distract my attention from them. This time she said, "Look at the splendid view of Hari Parbat, the soft green of the encircling mountains and the snow peaks looking down from their heights." We began to speculate about our twisting course on the river that brought Hari Parbat into view, until we were past the mosque. There was a

little stir, and tipping by the boatmen as they changed places. The river rippled deeply, but we were going with the current. Tai said, "You can see with what ease two of them paddle the shikara."

Soon we rode under Zaina Kadal, the fourth bridge; mingled in with the houses on the banks were Hindu temples with graceful tapering roofs as well as more of the wooden block type mosques, and on the far bank there was a glimpse of the old Maharaja's palace.

Tai and I counted five as we went under Alli Kadal. Our boatman now crept up close to us and said that we had passed all the bridges; we would turn back. Tai let him know, with heat, that we had counted. There were two more to go. Then the boatman pleaded that the river was in such full flood, it was dangerous to go on. "The river is full of craft," Tai said to me. "They want the extra money for the journey without the extra effort." She spoke sharply, and on we went.

Now they were hardly paddling, just holding the little boat from tipping from side to side; the swift current was carrying us. The houses along this stretch of the river were especially ruinous; their balconies looked as if they would fall at any minute. The doongahs were closer together, their matting tops too, ruined in condition. This was the poorest section we had seen.

"Six." Tai counted for Naya Kadal. The current now was even swifter and I was relieved that Tai soon counted "seven" and we went under Suffa Kadal, the last of the city bridges.

The swift current was sweeping us along. All four boatmen were using their paddles. "Tai, they will never be able to turn the boat." Tai ignored the struggle, but I suffered with the boatmen as they beat their paddles against the Jhelum. Our direction changed and we veered across to the bank.

"Perhaps we will have to get out and take a tonga back," I said to Tai. But in the quieter water at the side, the boatmen turned the shikara around and we went up against the current. We seemed standing still, almost carried back, then the boatmen straining with their

paddles began to push our little boat up the river. After we were under the fifth bridge it was not such a struggle but it did take the strength of all four boatmen to keep us going. Under the third bridge, they began to take turns again. Here river life was at its full, doongahs lining the banks below the overgrown gardens and the great ruined houses of yesterday. Here many shikaras were plying back and forth. The trip back took almost twice as long as the ride down the river but when we came out of the lock at Dal Gate, Dal Lake looked smooth as glass.

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Raj was waiting for us on the stone steps. He slid into the shikara, pleading. He wanted us to go out to the pleasure barge just across the lake; we could see a wedding party and take pictures. In the morning, we had watched the clumsy wooden flatboat with its flat roof and a few windows, and listened to the raucous music coming from it. Raj had told us that this was a customary part of a wedding ceremony. This barge was rented, it was the only one on the lake with a motor, and all day the groom and his friends would ride on the lake. Most of the time the barge had drifted, but when they put on the motor, the noise seemed horrible in the quiet vale.

I joined with Raj in wanting to go out to the barge. He explained that the groom was his close friend and the father of the bride was the cook at our hotel. Tai kept servants in strict line, but certain things she did for them. This influenced her now and she gave acceptance with a quick side jerk of her head, paid off our two extra boatmen, giving them double with no complaint, and off we went out on the lake. Raj perched on the bow of the shikara.

When we reached the barge, there was a little ladder at the side. Somehow, Raj hauled me up, the shikara tipping.

It was dim under the flat roof and Tai and I were

both inside before we realized what we had got ourselves into; the barge was packed full of men.

Raj pushed his way into the center of the crowd, men drawing back to make room for us to move forward. Our eyes adjusting to the lack of light, we saw the central figure of the wedding party, the bridegroom. A *durri*, a thin handwoven rug, had been spread. On it was a thick mattress covered with white cloth and crouched on it, his legs covered with a woolen shawl, was a slight young man. He wore a dark coat, white cuffs hanging down from the sleeves, and a wristwatch. His head was wrapped in a large white turban, spotlessly clean; around his neck hung garland upon garland of tincl and roses, and pinned all over the front of his coat were rupee notes. His thin brown hands, fingers turned under, were tense in his lap; his long face was hollowed, his mouth a tight line under a little mustache; his eyes had a wild look; his head was tipped forward self-consciously.

Raj begged Tai, "A picture of the bridegroom." As Tai fixed her flash on the Kodak, I opened my shoulder bag, took out a rupee. In an instant, Raj fastened it on the bridegroom and got himself back of his friend in order to be in the picture. Tai snapped them just as they were, without any posing. There were no old men in the group. A few were middle-aged, but most were young, ranging down to four-year-old boys. The youngest were asleep but the teen-agers were bright-eyed. Most of the men were sitting cross-legged, the legs that were sticking out having the usual tight trousers; all of the party, even the little boys, wore shirts without ties and wool coats. The older men wore Moslem fezzes; the rest were bareheaded except the bridegroom who wore a big white turban.

The picture taken, we turned to leave, but Raj leaped out from behind the bridegroom and was at Tai's elbow, asking her to take another picture. The men who had moved aside to let us approach the bridegroom had closed back into their places on the floor of the barge. They were the musicians, six of them, with shocks of

black hair, flashing dark eyes, shining white teeth, squatting over drums, two with sarangis (a stringed instrument) and one with a flute. Just back of them appeared a figure in full skirt, shawl around the shoulders, scarf around the head and hanging in folds behind, as the Kashmir women wear it. Raj's voice was trembling with emotion. "Take the musicians and the nautch dancer."

Tai's body was stiff with anger (this trip to the boat would have been an insult to a Moslem woman and she took it as an insult to a Hindu), but she raised her Kodak again. As the flash exploded, the dancer, smiling, raised one hand in a traditional gesture of the dance, the other hand holding a rose in the traditional pose of the Begums. The musicians began their strident music with its incessant beat and the dancer began to quiver. In that moment, Tai said sternly, "Come, Akka," and pushed through the musicians.

Raj got us back in the shikara, but on the stern he clung to the ladder of the barge, and the boatmen lingered, not using their paddles. The nautch dancer came into the wide doorway and began her dance again, the music in rapid beat to the sinuous movements. In the light I could see that the dancer was a young boy, lithe and handsome in a bold way; the full flowered skirt was as dirty as most Kashmiri garments. After the usual twisting and writhing, the dancer took off the shawl and held it up covering "her" face; below its cover the portrayal of the marriage night was vivid. I froze, our boatmen were immobile, Raj was carried away, and Tai for once did nothing. Up came the dancer's face from behind the shawl; now the lad with an audacious smile was holding the shawl out. I opened my moneybag and threw a few coins into its folds just as Tai said, "Raj, Chalo [make haste]"

As we went back across the lake, Raj looked back at the dancer with a rapt look saying, "These are poor people and that is the best dancer they could afford. How I wish that you could see a really good nautch dance. The expensive boys are more beautiful than girls."

Tai was silent; she was furious. To satisfy my curiosity and to ease the situation, I asked about the rest of the ceremonies. Raj told me that the men of the wedding party would drift about the lake till evening. Then they would go to the bridegroom's house and drink tea. From there they would go in procession, musicians at their head, the bridegroom riding in a car, to the bride's house. Here more guests would be gathered for the feast that would last late into the night. The wedding would be over when the couple departed for the bridegroom's house.

Tai flounced as we walked back to the hotel. Her only comment was "Disgraceful."

9

Tai had finished her combination devotions and bath when Raj brought our bed tea at six. Tai, without using the word hurry, hustled me through my bath, finished our packing, shouted "Bearer" out the door to bring Raj back to strap our bedrolls and carry our luggage down. Breakfast was slow, but soon we were on the hotel steps, Raj calling for the tonga driver. The tonga wallah had been ordered to come the night before, but he drove in slowly, half asleep. As Raj piled our luggage in the front seat and got us into the tippy back seat, the wallah pulled some grass for the horse who snatched the whole handful in one bite. Tai and I sitting with our backs to the wallah and our luggage, looked at Dal Lake, misty green in the early light. No one was on the various steps, no one was astir in the street of shops, but when we entered the square courtyard of the Government Transport Headquarters, we were in a bustling little world of travelers.

As we walked across the courtyard to the sightseeing buses for Pahalgam, due to depart at 8:30, the bootblack boys were pushing their shines, a few of the men yield

Tai put her thumbs in the tiny hands, her hands around the child's hands and wrists, the warm, surrounding movements Indian women use to handle small children. Slowly, Tai let the little girl's head sink backward. Then she pulled her forward and said a quick "cha."

On and on the play went, over and over the delirious slipping away, the laughing return. Just before the bus started us on our journey to Pahalgam, the baby leaned toward Tai, put her head with its soft curls on Tai's breast and slept. Tai's eyes were deep and dark; her thoughts, with the deep, dark mysteries of life. Where did this little soul come from? Who was she before this reincarnation? Was she a yellow butterfly floating from flower to flower? What will her stay in this life be like? What will she be next, in her journey back to God?

The Parsee mother turned half-around and began visiting with Tai, so the eight miles to our first halt at the saffron fields at Pampur passed quickly. I looked out at paddies through the rows of trees lining the road and listened to the young woman.

Bombay had always been her home; most of the Indian Parsees lived there. Her husband's glass business was doing well, but she was still working as a secretary. When they had another baby she would stay home; their house was small and unsatisfactory, but they hoped to change soon. Tai said that her home was in Nagpur and explained my visit. I said, "Your scarf is so lovely." The Parsee woman replied, "A cousin in Persia sent it to me. Even my parents were born in India, but we still keep in close touch with our Persian relatives."

My thoughts drifted away from the woman talk to my books. Moorcroft in 1819 had visited Pampur saying: "This place is celebrated for its saffron, which grows in the neighborhood on the driest spots in great abundance." And Wakefield in 1879 had written about it at length: "Pampur being a corruption of Padma pur, the 'City of Vishnu' (founded some thousand years ago) now contains but a few houses. The richest soil in the valley is said to be at this place . . . the saffron grounds

occupy a large space upon the plains around Pampur, some ten or twelve miles . . . the soldiers of Alexander (The Great) were lost in admiration . . . of the purple flower."

Today the purple flowers are picked by hundreds of workers, who then hand-pick the stigmas. For a pound of quality saffron, sorters hand-pick the stigmas of 75,000 flowers, three stigmas to each blossom. Saffron, a word derived from the Arabic *za' faran*, comes from *crocus sativus*, a bulb resembling the spring crocus. The ancients used saffron as a perfume and dye and as an ingredient in medicines. Various people eat it as a condiment; Hindus employ the pigment to make forehead marks. This ancient spice is among the costliest. The wholesale price is about \$32.00 a pound.

Tai had felt the age-old delight of paying the cost of gold for the precious yellow powder at the Kashmir Government Emporium in Srinagar to carry back for seasoning and coloring our Divali sweets, and she had made certain that it was this year's crop of saffron, so when the bus pulled up beside vast bare ground, I knew already that the crop had been picked.

The passengers were grumbling; they had wanted to see the purple blooms, and with just barren fields they didn't want to get out of the bus. The driver acting also as tour conductor herded us out anyway for the scheduled fifteen minute halt at Pampur.

Our next halt was at Avantipur. "Archaeological ruins, fifteen minutes," our bus driver called out. Although he was our tour conductor, our driver had no information about the ruins. There remained steps up to a massive entrance, supporting pillars, and some carved stone work. The foundation line was evident, and all about there were the tremendous stones that had been the structure; their solidity fully equal to that of the most massive monuments of Egypt; earthquakes must have been the chief agents in their overthrow. One of the few carvings left was a sun-faced naked god, a big snake hanging on his body like the sacred cord of the Brahmans. About the god on the carved panel were his

much younger than we were and much larger; vitality and good humor seemed to spill out of her. She said nothing; her Indian training did not let her advise her elders, but she felt a duty to stay with us and to shield us. "Stand in front of me." I spoke gently for I didn't want Tai to be cross with me and she was still saying "No, Akkal!" The tufts of grass were not so tall as they had looked. They didn't come halfway up to my knees. Tai and the Parsee girl stood in front of me. Tai's sari made quite a screen but the girl's legs in slacks were not much protection. I kept an eye on the men.

At last, I stood up and said, "Next, Tai." I didn't look at her but stepped into position beside the Parsee girl. She was a woman with a child but she was still vibrant, with almond eyes far apart, her face a lovely oval; her breasts were like those in the old voluptuous frescoed wall paintings. You were hardly aware of clothes on her tall body. She seemed the image of some long-ago Persian queen.

Tai managed quickly. She had bowed to the ignominy but did not loiter. She came and stood beside me. Nothing was said, but the Parsee girl took her turn; in an instant there was a faint pop, then a louder one. I could see Tai's face by turning my eyes sideways. A closed look came over her eyes. All at once the Parsee began to speak in her full clear voice.

"Some men say the greatest satisfaction in life comes from a full meal of rich food. Some men say the greatest satisfaction in life comes from intercourse with a beautiful woman, but I agree with the men who say the greatest satisfaction in life comes from a good hearty bowel movement."

Tai had shut her eyes and her ears to events, but she had forgotten to shut her nose. I could see her nostrils quiver. Tai and I got on the bus promptly. We said nothing; I had to shut the laughter tight in me.

The bus rattled us again over the metal roads. It was 63 miles to Pahalgam; our next halt would be about halfway. It was scheduled as Anarnag (Town of Springs), a one hour halt. Perhaps out of deference to

the tourists, most of them Hindus, the name of the town was not mentioned. It was Islamabad, but the springs were among those most sacred to the Hindus. Moorcroft (1819) describes it thus: "The town of Islamabad is built upon the extremity of a long, low spur from the mountains to the east . . . on the side of the hill were several tanks, supplied by springs. There were many fish in them, which are fed, and were quite tame; they are considered sacred and never caught. At Islamabad are three hundred shops of shawl weavers. . . . It was as filthy a place as can well be imagined, and swarmed with beggars, some of whom were idle vagabonds, but the greater number in real distress."

Wakefield gives a description of the spring itself: "The ancient Anat Nag, 'the spring of Anat,' the serpent of Vishnu and the emblem of eternity. . . . This holy fountain issues from the foot of the hill, and flows through a series of canals and tanks, built up with stone, to the outside of an enclosure formed by a huge wall surrounding the site, where the waters then fall to the ground in the form of a cascade of considerable size. All the tanks and canals are filled with trout, and being considered by the Hindus as sacred, they are bountifully fed by the pious worshippers at the fount, in consequence of which they become very tame, and attain to goodly proportions. Many similar springs exist near this spot, the waters of one or two of them being conducted to the town by aqueducts for useful purposes. One that issues from a fissure in the rock is highly sulphurous and slightly warm, possessing without doubt active medicinal properties."

We found Anat Nag, the sacred spring just as it had been described those long years ago with its high wall, water gushing into tanks, and canals full of lazy trout; they rolled about with no room and no desire to swim. Tai and I were eager to feed them but were not able to get food; we were informed that Brahmin priests fed them at daybreak. There were several small pavilions, the feeding stations. A huge old chinar tree spread broad branches of shade over the water.

I leaned over and started to dash some of the water over my hands, they were dirty from the bus, but Tai checked me with a reprimand. "Don't, Akka, that is a sacred pool."

Close by there was a pleasure garden called Sirkari Bagh. We were to view this garden, and we could order lunch; the small brick lodge that had stood at the side of the garden had been repaired and was used to serve meals to tourists. Tai and I at once walked over to the lodge and ordered.

The bearer told us we would have time to view the garden before lunch was ready. The rest of the passengers were already there walking about; we seemed to be the only ones ordering a meal. In the distance, the mountains were green and shadowed. Stately chinara trees shielded the garden. Sirkari Bagh was about the same size as the Mogul gardens at Srinagar but almost level, without their rising view. There was a series of tanks, canals connecting them; there were wide green grass paths but no flowers except a few in pots set about on the stone ledges. At the far end, there was a simple pavilion through which the water was brought into the garden. Its waterfalls were wide and shallow. The chief feature of the garden was the tremendous amount of water flowing through it. The springs poured water so fast and in such quantity over the low waterfalls that it boiled below in a line of white foam.

Our Parsee bus neighbors were sitting on the grass with a lunch, as were most of the other passengers. Tai and I made the circuit of the garden to the far end and back and found ourselves having to cross the canals to get over to the lodge. None of them were wide but both of us were laughing with our skipping over the water, and one of my shoes was wet when we reached the open porch where two of the many tables had cloths spread on them. A young couple was sitting at one of them. The young man jumped up as we came up on the porch. Tai said, "Why don't we eat at the same table?"

The young couple was proud but painfully shy. He was dark and thin with a white shirt, sweater vest, and

but could see nothing to buy. I wanted to stop and ask for shawls. "Tai, surely there must be some shawls where once there were three hundred shawl weavers," but Tai pushed me on saying, "I can't let you touch anything in this filthy place, Akka."

The spring was not gushing but dripping out over a ruined ancient slab of masonry into a dirty tank with a sulfurous smell. Some of the tourists were lifting the water to their lips, using their right hands like cups. Tai stretched her arm out and got a few drops as they ran down the slab; she made a face when she tasted it.

Back in the bus, we were off without another halt to Pahalgam. Pahalgam was at 7,200 ft. and we began at once to make the rise, but in easy stages. Very soon we were out of rice fields and past the occasional cluster of bare wooden houses that made the villages; we had a stream at one side and forest at the other. The Liddar was running full, foaming on the rocks. The woods were masses of chinar, walnut, and mulberry with an increasing number of evergreens as we mounted higher. Now there were no villages; we saw no birds or animals; the landscape was severe, quiet, but there was richness in the dark greens of the heavy forest and there was wealth in the water carrying down loam and minerals to the valley. Our eyes were lifting, looking up to see the high peaks of the Himalayas, their snows the sacred abode of the Hindu gods.

At once the road leveled off; we were in the Liddar Valley and drawing up on the single street where a few shops straggled along. On the side by the Liddar River were a number of two- and three-story brown wooden hotels. Everyone else seemed to know where he was going: the bridal couple had reservations at the New Hotel Wazir. Tai favored the Khalsa Hotel for us. If she remembered correctly, it had the best view of the river and the valley.

We got our holdalls and suitcases on the skull-capped heads of two porters, their tunics and trousers sagging with dirt, and we followed them down the street, there were no tongas or rickshaws. They turned

into a narrow alley between two buildings, each of them with a bright display of Kashmiri chain-stitched rugs. A short distance down, we came to a fenced yard with some scraggly grass and a few tables and chairs. A narrow, rectangular one-story building at one side was evidently, by the smell, kitchen and dining room. Our porters trooped right on to the two-story hotel building with balconies above and below of heavy brown wood. They threw our belongings in a heap, were paid, and left complaining about the amount. Tai shouted "Bearer" and at last a servant appeared and directed us to the office. It was back in the small rectangular building in the end of the dining room—with its spread of tables with dirty cloths, windows tight shut, some warmth, and a good deal of smell coming in from the kitchen.

The manager welcomed us. Travelers were scarce at the end of the season, but he had only a second-floor room to offer. He assured us that there was no danger of fire—the kitchen was in the separate building—and in the next breath he said that we would not suffer from the cold because there was a stove in each room; firewood would be extra, of course. In the hotel, the steps were wide, bare and dirty; at the top of them we found a room dark and bare, two tape-laced Navarre beds, a couple of chairs, a ragged big Kashmiri rug on the floor, a bathroom with commode, tin basin, and bathing stone behind it. The room and bathroom stretched from balcony to balcony, and there was no stove. The manager began shouting for the bearer to fetch one. I could see no sign of a chimney, but Tai thought we should take the room.

I started to carry a chair out on the balcony, but Tai checked me. We stood until the bearers came carrying a little old sheet-iron stove. Tai had them leave our holdalls on the beds and carry the two chairs out onto the balcony. At each end, rooms filled the corners so the balcony was enclosed on three sides; the late afternoon sun was shining in on the whitewashed walls. The chairs were cane with cushions. We didn't take off our coats

but sat in comfort, taking our first loog look at the lovely Liddar Valley, and I looked some at the balcony railing. It was well executed in what we call Chinese Chippendale style. The two windows of our bedroom were on the balcony, the curtains of one of them pushed aside, and I could see the servants struggling with the stove. They put up a stove pipe. Then I noticed that one of the window panes was tin; they removed it, passed the stove pipe through, came out to the balcony, putting in lengths of stove pipe, head high, and fastened them up with pieces of wire to the edge of the balcony. Shortly sparks were flying out, blowing back into the balcony. I at once was afraid of fire, but Tai leaned back resting, saying that just the kindling of the fire made sparks.

The rooms at the end of the balcony had a curtain strung across the door; we could hear people moving about and talking. Soon a stout twelve-year-old boy came out, followed by his stout father. The father at once fell into conversation with Tai, the boy engaging me with an account of his knowledge of the United States "I'm very good in school," he said. Our voices soon brought out the woman, shorter and stouter than her husband, with a plump, pretty face. The thin mountain air seemed cold to us, we were bundled in our coats, but she had on a thin white sari and a very short-sleeved blouse. She did have a small striped wool scarf around her neck, but it was more decoration than warmth. An old man followed her out; he was wiry thin and had the frail feminine look of many old men. His cheeks and mouth had fallen in with the loss of teeth and he cackled with laughter at every remark. The woman had on only two gold bangles, but she at once set up their status. They were from Bombay; her husband was an officer in a bank; she was a social worker for the government, the boy was their only child; the old man was her father. Tai was friendly but reserved; she did not have to tell me that these people were Punjabis; their stout bodies and darker skins gave that information. Soon the woman shivered and said she must go back to their fire, but

already Tai had found out that the next day the family was going to make the mountain trip to Chandanwari and she had said that we too would go on that day.

We went in our room, warmed ourselves at the little stove, its metal sides glowing red with the pitchy heat of the evergreen wood, and then decided to walk down to the little main street. As we passed the dining-kitchen hall, Tai went in to inform the manager that we would go on the Chandanwari trip the next day. We moved slowly in the thin mountain air. Tai was in a low mood; I too did not feel the usual exhilaration that comes with high altitude. We stopped at the corner shop with the big rug display. Tai had said that she wanted to carry back a good sized carpet. The merchant was eager, throwing out rug after rug from the piles heaped on the floor. It was a dark little hole so I insisted that he take some rugs outside where we could see. There was a lovely one covered with *chinar* leaves in shades of green, Tai's favorite color, but she would take no interest.

We strolled on down the street, the only people out. Farther down, one of the shops—a small rectangle with one side full open—had three Singer hand sewing machines flat on the floor, men squatting in front of them turning the cranks rapidly on bulky garments. Along one wall there were bolts of cloth in piles, and hanging on the other wall many tunics with matching trousers. I at once wanted to buy. Tai in her low mood was not encouraging but asked and was told that they would take orders. I got around Tai by saying that I would like to have one of the outfits for Ellie, my granddaughter. Tai still held me back asking how I could tell them her size.

I held my hand to my shoulder. "Tai, if they make it for a girl this tall, Ellie can use it as a costume for several years." Already I was looking over the materials; a few were coarse, poorly woven wool but most were a heavy twilled cotton with a light fleece on the wrong side. I chose a lovely green with a tiny orange flower. Tai still did not approve but gave the order. The men were not agreeing, I could see.

Tai said, "They say that they cannot get it done by day after tomorrow." I suggested that I give them a couple of rupees down so they would cut the cloth and that she tell them I had to have it. At last one of the men gave a quick jerk of his head to the side and I handed over some money.

Tai said as we walked on, "You are so foolish with your money, Akka. They will just keep what you have given."

We walked on down; the bazaar was only a block long. The bus we had come on was parked at the end of it waiting for the five o'clock return. Clouds had settled in so that we couldn't see the far mountains. When we turned back, we found the bridal couple walking toward us. We stopped and chatted with them, Tai speaking lightly to them; their serious, shy love seemed so right to her. She told them that a party from our hotel and we too were going to make the trip to Chandanwari the next day.

"Why don't you come? It is better to go in a group."

The girl cast her eyes down; she said nothing unless Tai asked her a direct question, but the young man smiled and said that they would enjoy going in our party. He would make arrangements for their ponies.

Back at the Khalsa Hotel it was time to eat. The tablecloths were dirty, the bearers' clothes greasy; Tai complained of the stink in the tightly closed room. I said nothing; any fault-finding on my part would only worsen Tai's feelings, so I picked the bits that I could eat from the poorly cooked, red-pepper hot Indian food.

When we went outside to walk across to the hotel, beyond the fence a dozen ponies were milling about, a mazdoor at the head of each one. The beasts were neighing shrilly and kicking about so that dirt was rising. Tai said, "Go on to our room, Akka; the manager has had them bring ponies for me to choose for our trip. I can do better without you."

In our room, the fire was out, the air dark and dismal. I didn't touch it until Tai was there, but when she came I insisted on building it up. Tai scolded me,

"Akka, call the bearer; do not make fire yourself. We are going to bed; we do not want to leave fire while we are asleep." I replied firmly, "I'm going to heat the room well. I will not go to sleep until the fire is out." I put in a paper, some wood, and lighted it. The handful that I put in was all the wood there was. I opened the door and yelled "Bearer!" Tai said calmly, "The servants will not come now; they will be eating. They will think you mad to want so much heat, to burn so much wood." I went out the hall to the front balcony. My American voice boomed out "Bearer" in the direction of the kitchen. A servant came running. "Wood, wood!" I yelled at him, but he had to come up and ask Tai what I wanted. We had brought our coarse black Kashmiri blankets and we spread our coats over us but even then it was cold.

As I lay there, my eyes watching the little stove red now with the heat, I hoped that going up into the mountains would sweeten Tai. I could not fathom her mood but I knew that at this moment I was Christian and Tai was Hindu. There was not the usual flowing together of our minds and hearts. I had no access to maps, so I had accepted Chandanwari simply as a trip to the mountains. Tai had said vaguely, "There is a glacier if you go all the way, but that is not possible at this time. We will make only the first stage of the journey." There was nothing in what she said to give me even a hint that we were going on the first third of the pilgrimage route to Amar Nath Cave, *one of the holiest shrines in the Hindu religion.*

I was destined like Moorcroft and Wakefield not to reach Amar Nath Cave. The pilgrimage is made just once a year; the cave must be reached on the morning of the full moon day of August and the pilgrims must leave before the moon is up. Thousands of Hindus of the various sects from every corner of India make the journey, some walking barefoot all the way, some carried in dandis, a woven basket chair, some on ponies, but all must walk the last five miles. The simple people believe the journey will make their wishes come true

and their belief may make it so. The learned Hindus regard the pilgrimage as a symbol of man's spiritual search for God. The view of the lingam in the cave is the climax of religious experience for all Hindus.

The pilgrims gather at Pahalgam; the twenty-six miles to the remote and lonely cave in the Himalayas is covered in four treks: Pahalgam to Chandanwari, Chandanwari to Vaojan, Vaojan to Panchitarni, Panchitarni to Amar Nath Cave. The last stage is a difficult five miles up a narrow path and across a glacier, at 16,000 feet altitude. The pilgrims on foot are guided by the Mattan pandas (priests) to reach Amar Nath at the auspicious moment. Amar Nath Cave, shallow like a big outdoor stage, has rising in it a great grayish glistening column of ice, unbroken for centuries; it is to them the lingam, the living symbol of the god Siva. The belief is that the column, the lingam, waxes and wanes with the phases of the moon, and on the full moon day of August, Siva's lingam is at its climax.

Moorcroft, although unable to visit Amar Nath, describes the route in detail, and writes of it as the home of Siva. He says: "The entrance to the cave is said to be one hundred yards broad and thirty high; the depth of the cave is five hundred yards. There are no inscriptions in it nor any sculpture; there is said to be the figure of a gosein (a lingam), which figure increases and decreases in size. . . . It is customary to visit the cave only about full moon. Persons in the cave of Amar Nath assert that they can hear the barking of the dogs in Tibet.

Wakefield writes: "We did not visit Amaranath Cave, the distance and the roughness and sometimes even, owing to landslips, the dangerous condition of the road preventing the journey." Then Wakefield quotes what Vigne learned from a native of the country that: "Amar (meaning immortal), Nath (Sanskrit, Siva) Ambernath (his spelling) is a place of pilgrimage sacred to Siva who is supposed to reside within the cavern in the form of a block of ice. . . . On a full moon night in primeval time, Siva of his great mercy and kindness, bestowed upon the divinities the water of immortality by

which they were freed from the persecution of the angel of death."

But I was destined not even to know that I was going on the first stage of the journey to Amar Nath, the cave as holy to the Hindus as Bethlehem is to Christians, as Mecca is to the Mohammedans.

10

The next morning, I pushed my eyes open; the room was dark, but I could see Tai's dark little shape sitting cross-legged on her bed, her hands folded before her eyes. I didn't even slip my hand under my pillow to get my watch. Tai always wanted motionless silence while she made her devotions. She hadn't pulled a blanket up around her; she was apart from cold or any of the needs of life while she prayed, but this morning she was more than ever away from the world. Suddenly her hands went down, she jumped out of bed, at the same moment beginning to sing a Veda (hymn). Her voice loud and clear, she gathered up newspapers, twigs, and wood and in a minute she had the fire in the stove lighted and was on her way to the bathroom, for her bath too was a part of the ritual. I wondered what she would do if the buckets of hot water were not waiting. She kept servants strictly in line, but this was so very early in the morning and it seemed such a special morning that, though I could hear water splashing, I made no move until Tai came back briskly calling, "Come at once, Akka, while the water is hot." I did as she said; this was Tai's India and I felt deeply that I should conform to Tai's customs. I shivered even while the hot water was dashing over me. Tai hustled me back to the chair by the fire, calling out the door, "Bearer, bed tea," and while I dressed she put out an extra sweater and my extra pair of knee length wool socks, and I put on layer after layer of clothing.

I could see the ponies and mazdoors outside, standing waiting by the fence. Eventually, Tai would say, "Don't fret, Akka, I will arrange," but I never knew the details of arrangements. Today, I knew only that we were going on ponies, a day's trip up into the mountains, so I ventured, "When are the others going?" Tai replied, "We must be off as soon as we have breakfast. This will be a long, hard trip for you, and we must have as much time for it as possible so that you can rest along the way." Then she added, "Last night the family from Bombay and the bridal couple were haggling over the charges, but I selected the best ponies and did not question the cost and I've hired three mazdoors. You must have one on each side of you where the trail is bad."

There was no sign of breakfast or bearers in the dining room, but a couple of sharp claps of Tai's hands brought them, sleepy-eyed, with our boiled eggs, buns, and fruit. The bearers had jumped up from their sleeping place; their hands looked as if they were never washed and their dirty tunics and trousers were worn day and night.

Tai and I were beginning to generate excitement. Now she was bubbling with laughter. I, even with my books and maps at home, was still unaware that Chandanwari was the first stage of the journey to Amar Nath. Tai had spoken of the trip as a picnic in the mountains; she loved ponies, and narrow trails, the slip of the hoof that was dangerous. She loved the glory of the mountains, the tall evergreens, the dashing streams. Today she would enjoy nature; we would picnic at the waterfall at Chandanwari. She made no mention that this was the route, and I know that she did not let her mind say to her, "I am on the road to Amar Nath," for this was not the time for the pilgrimage.

The hotel manager had appeared. He walked out of the dining room with us, opening the gate in the fence. Once we were outside, two fat ponies, just alike except that one had a white star on his forehead, were led out by two mazdoors, just alike too. Both had skullcaps tight on their black hair, both had oval faces, olive skin,

well-shaped noses, dark eyes. They were short men, no taller than I am. Their bodies looked thin under their crude, heavy wool coats and baggy woolen trousers. Their ankles were bare, their feet in clumsy sandals with wooden soles, straw-woven tops. The third man was taller. His clothes were cotton, but he had a wool shawl draped around his shoulders. The manager had called "Bearer" several times. Now one came with the parcels for our lunch; two of the mazdoors had sacks slung over their shoulders and they tossed in our lunch.

Tai said, "Choose your pony, Akka."

At once I said, "May I have the one with the white star? He has a twinkle in his eye but it is not wicked. What is his name?"

"Bulbul," the mazdoor said. The men were smiling and pleased too.

"Oh, Tai, that is a good omen for the day. I ride Bulbul again."

The men heaved and pushed, Tai scolding at me, until I was in the saddle, then up she got and away we went at a brisk walk, up the barren passage between the stores. The display of rugs had been left out all night, but at the sound of the horses' hoofs a man raised his head up just inside the open shop. He lay there rolled in one of the rugs.

We were the only life out on the main street. Tai said, "What is the time, Akka?" Tai's watch had given out, and I had only my husband's, carried zipped in one of the compartments of my shoulder bag.

The horses were ambling, so I got it out.

"Just five o'clock, Tai."

She gave her fat pony a good slap on his rump, he began to trot, my pony followed and I squealed, "Tai, let me get organized! Look at the sign!" There was a sign in English nailed up on one of the electric light poles: "Do not gallop through the main street."

Tai sniffed, "A lot of Indians fancy themselves horse-men even if they have never been on a horse before."

This was the main street of Pahalgam. The only wheels on it were those of the daily bus; they stopped

at the far end. The struggling light poles that furnished a few dim electric bulbs in the hotels ceased. No train, no plane had ever come here, no carts, no tongas. As our horses settled down to a fast walk, we were going where the wheel as the symbol of civilization had not gone.

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The valley was a gentle soft green; the sun had not broken through the mist that surrounded and hid the *high mountains from our sight*. We had left behind, with the hotels and the light poles, the bungalows. These like the hotels had stout brown wood walls and steep roofs against winter snow. On each side there were bare patches of ground where crops had been harvested, and tufty grass, bushes and trees. The road was north-east, following the East Liddar River. Our mazdoors trotted by our sides, keeping even pace with the ponies. Now there were farmhouses, some back in the meadows, some close to the road. There were walnut, willow, mulberry, and elm trees with big bundles of branches in the first forks. I had seen this storage as we had come into Srinagar. I called to Tai to ask the mazdoors about it. Their speech was based on Sanskrit so she was able to understand and talk to them. The cut branches were for winter fodder.

Grass stored for winter fodder is twisted into thick ropes immediately after having been cut, and hung across the upper branches of trees. I saw these ropes of hay hanging in the trees too. And in one farmyard in a small area, tight with a fence made of laced branches, there was a heap of corn, ears as small as our popcorn. I stopped my pony and began to yell at Tai, "Stop, stop!" She wheeled around and came back to me.

"What is it, Akka?"

"I want to buy some corn for Bulbul."

Tai snorted, "*What nonsense. It is for their winter feed. They will not sell.*"

I persisted in making the plea "A woman from Iowa must buy corn when she sees it."

Tai corrected me, "This is maize," but she did speak to the mazdoor, he called out, and a man came out into view. I had a glimpse of a woman and children but that was all. They seemed to have no curiosity about travelers from the outside world. Our mazdoors made the deal. "Two anna for corn," Tai said firmly, before I had a chance to say a rupee's worth. I had slid off my horse. With even the mile we had come, I felt the saddle and was thankful that Bulbul was fat. Bulbul twinkled his eyes at me in wonderment as I held the corn to his mouth. He nuzzled the nubbin of an ear in, chewed slowly and spit out the cob. I gave Tai's pony an ear too, Tai urging me back on my horse saying the horses could eat the corn at noon.

The trail began to wind and rise. We were riding through Alpine-like meadows, the houses like small chalets built quite close to the Liddar on bits of high ground where floods could not reach them. We were winding higher now. Pahalgam was at 7,200 feet; Chandanwari was a good 12,000 feet. At once we were in an evergreen forest, mountainsides towering above us, mountain streams dashing down over boulders to reach the Liddar.

Wakefield said: "On leaving the main valley and entering the divide on the right, the path, though worn by the pilgrimages of ages, is rocky and fatiguing, and rendered often dangerous by landslips or avalanches, causing frequent fatal accidents."

We were on the narrow path where in only a few places could two ponies pass. At the first of these Tai halted and had me, on Bulbul, go ahead so that she could watch my progress. She had a guide on each side of me. There was a row of stones on the outer edge of the path that most of the time fell off into nothing for hundreds of feet. The outer guide skipped along, most of the time on the stones. I couldn't bear to look at his feet in those clumsy sandals; I kept my eyes on the changing beauty of trees, rocks, and falling water. Tai's guide walked by her pony's head and took hold of the bridle in the worst places. My feet were sore from push-

ing them against the stirrups, my legs ached from hugging Bulbul's fat sides, but I felt a comfort in the pony. The lovely day at Gulmarg that the other Bulbul had given me seemed transferred to this sweet pony with the same name. I called to Tai, "Find out about Bulbul's owner." Somehow I couldn't endure thinking the pony belonged to some agent who had interest only in the rupees he could get for his hire. I felt an affection for Bulbul and wanted him to have care and protection.

We had come to a wider place where a new path was being built and stone dug out was piled high. Tai called a halt saying that I must rest and walk about a bit. As soon as I was off, she called for us to stand still for the light was good against the stone wall and she would snap my picture with Bulbul and the mazdoors.

Tai had the men's stories: the mazdoor in the cotton clothes with the shawl lived in Pahalgam. He was in the habit of picking up the work he could from tourists. The two in the heavy coats were brothers; the one that had walked by Tai was the elder. They owned the ponies and made a business during the summer of hiring them out, but only if they went along as mazdoors to see that the ponies were not hard used. They owned a farm, about twenty acres. We had passed it and on our return they would point it out. It lay far over, close by the Liddar. One had been married but his wife had died some years before and left him with one child, an eight-year-old son. Their father lived with *them*, an aged *man* hardly able to feed himself. They had twenty sheep and a cow besides *the* two ponies. During the winter, *the* brothers prepared the wool and spun it; they had woven the *heavy* wool they *were* wearing and they had made the coats too. The winter's weaving kept them in clothes and blankets. Once in a while, they had an extra piece of cloth to sell. Tears had run out of his eyes, Tai had said, when he told her how sad and hard his life was without a wife. They had used all their cash reserve for the dowry for that one. They could neither of them hope to get enough money together to marry. They could make their living; that was all.

While we stood resting and talking, the man from Bombay came along at a swift trot, on quite a large horse. His fat son was right behind him on a pony. We heard cries and moans. They came from the fat Bombay woman's mouth, but her horse should have been complaining too for she was a heavy load. She had a mazdoor at her horse's head. Close behind her, huddled over on a pony, was her father, a scarf tied tightly over his head. At the sight of us, she called out, "It's killing me, I can't stand it." Her body did quiver with each step of the horse. Her horse lunged up the steep grade ahead of us, and she was out of sight with her outcries.

While we were getting up on our ponies, the young couple passed. They were riding, the girl ahead, the man close behind. Tai said, "These people are so foolish not to hire mazdoors for each one of them; the horses are sure footed, but this is a dangerous trail."

On and on, up and up the ponies carried us. I tried to keep my mind from the slipping stones, the mazdoors always on the brink. The mountains above us were a dark mystery. The fragrant pungence of the evergreens was like smelling salts in the thin air; the water dashing down, over and among the giant boulders, made a constant roar. There was the urge for all of us to get up and away. I looked back and called to Tai to look; back from the gorge there was a far view of green mountains, towering behind them the snow peaks. Tai called, "Don't look back, Akka; keep looking up and ahead of you."

We got down and rested several times, but even on my feet, I was in constant fear of dashing down the mountainside like the streams. The view was awesome. Tai consulted the mazdoors, "We will be at Chandanwari in less than an hour, Akka. Hold yourself."

The trail seemed steeper and the mountains seemed constantly higher about us. The trail rises from 7,200 feet at Pahalgam to 16,427 at Amar Nath. The beauty was so wild humans seemed to have no place in it. Up a last steep rise, Tai called, "We are at Chandanwari." Around a turn among heavy trees, we saw the horses of

the others. They were off them, and the man from Bombay had his wife by the arm. She was crying out with every step. There was a cleared area, with long tangled grass where it was level for several hundred yards. At our side Chandanwari Falls poured out of the dark mystery above and hurled its white length onto the enormous boulders of the Liddar. White spray rose as high as the boulders. The roar was constant. Tai without a word started for the water.

She stopped briefly at the edge of the stream to take off her coat, wool hose, and sandals, and, with me shrieking that she would take her death of cold, walked out into the racing water. The stream bed was sharp with small rocks, but she walked out into the full rush and frothy foam of the torrent with a rapt look on her face. Her small body was wavering with the force of the stream. She was laughing and calling to me to take her picture. She sat down on an oval flat rock; she had gathered her sari high above her knees to keep it dry, her face expressed sheer delight. Her Hindu feet had been bathed in the glacial water flowing down from Amar Nath, the sacred cave.

The others in the party gathered now and the mazdoors brought the cloth sacks in which they had carried our lunch. The bridal couple had brought a picnic basket; the young wife had packed their food herself. She spread a little cloth and set it out. They even had a thermos of tea. The young husband was proud of her arrangement saying, "See, I will always be well looked after." The young wife's head dropped with modesty and pleasure at the praise. She had over her sari her gay plaid wool coat; her hair was out of its matronly bun, hanging in a long dark braid down her back.

Our lunch from the hotel was not in separate containers so the rest of us ate together, sitting on the ground, close to the young couple; Tai and the man managed. The Punjabi woman had let tears run from her eyes when she first sat down, but no one paid any attention to her plight so she began to comfort herself with food. She wore a Punjabi tunic, buttoned down

the front like a coat. It was a spring green in color, embroidered in heavy thread. The long, full trousers under it were pale pink silk, *the pink of spring flowers*. She was beautiful, her face rounded in the sweet lines many fat women have, but she kept moaning between bites as she shifted her weight from one soft buttock to the other. The sun was shining warm. Our food was simple, boiled eggs, buns, chapattis, fruit, and there was an ample amount. Tai and I did not eat much, but the Punjabis, even the thin grandpa, ate a great deal.

Just as we were finishing, a dog appeared; he looked like a black husky. I at once wanted to feed and pet him, but Tai warned that he was used as a watchdog by the government soldiers who lived in a small hut up the slope. This trail was guarded and regulated by the military the year around. It was evident that the dog had come for scraps, ours were thrown to him, but when I went a little near him, he growled and raised his hackles.

High in the mountains Chandanwari was sheltered, a gentle little valley except for the loud sound of the rushing water. There was heavy grass on the flat area where the mazdoors were sitting, eating, and watching the grazing horses; beyond them the ground was rough and covered with stones. Most of the trees were ever-greens but along the bank of the rocky stream there were a few stunted deciduous trees and small bushes. The rocky waste and the eternal snows were just above us in constant view, but in this little pocket the sun was warm.

After an hour, Tai said that we must start back. My body was sore, and I was not eager to get on Bulbul. Tai said that we must go so there would be time for me to get off often and rest. When we walked up to the horses, the guide came carrying the maize to me. Bulbul and Tai's pony curled up their lips, showing their white teeth in delight as they enjoyed the treat. Up on Bulbul, I wanted to groan like the Punjabi woman; my ankles and feet where I pushed into the stirrups were sore too.

The ride up had been a stiff climb, but going down was awful. At times the trail would wind. It was narrow

and always on the edge of a steep downward slope and again and again we *came to sudden descents*. One mazdoor would take Bulbul's bridle, the other would hold on to me and at the same time keep himself from plunging off the trail down the precipice; stones would rattle and fall as the ponies tried to hold back from plunging headlong down the steep trail. Tai was riding ahead of me, enjoying the mountain scenery, gaily calling to me to look at waterfalls and streams and the heavy bank of snow peaks above us. At the worst places, I insisted on walking down. Tai would wait then, each time saying that I would be safer on Bulbul; he was more used to the steep slopes than I. We stopped often and got off to rest. I was weary. We were almost halfway back when the bridal couple passed us. Not far behind them came the people from Bombay, the stout man in front riding his horse at a trot, the stout boy close behind him on his pony. There was a space before the horse with the woman came into view. She was crying aloud; the heads of her mazdoor and her pony were drooping, worn out with the complaints. The old man on his horse was close behind her, saying nothing but again cackling with laughter as we called out words of encouragement.

I kept wanting to get off more often and more often. Tai kept saying, "Stay on another ten minutes, Akka. We must get down the trail before dark."

It seemed forever to me before we were low enough in the valley to pass dwellings. Smoke for their evening meals was rising from their chimneys, thin spirals curling high in the thin air. The guide began to call and point. Tai called back, "He is telling us that the house we see at some distance over by the stream is his farm." It was like the others, low and dark brown, snug with a thatched roof. I thought of the grandfather and the eight-year-old boy there with the cow and the sheep.

Now we had only a couple of miles to go; the trail had widened out, there were no more steep banks, and the fall was gradual. It was almost dark. Tai rode beside me, the mazdoors walking together now that we didn't

need their help. They were talking. I said, "They still have two miles to go back with their ponies before their day is done," and Tai replied, "But they are content. This has been a profitable day for them—almost at the end of the season."

At last we came to the electric light poles of Pahalgam and the little group of bungalows, so like Swiss chalets. The road made a wide curve. I wished with all my heart that it ran straight like Iowa roads; every bounce on the back of Bulbul was torture. Then we were on the main street, down the little road to the hotel, finally halted by the fence. Tai slipped off her horse and came to me.

I began to laugh and half cry, "Tai, I can't get off. I can't move."

She called and two of the mardoors began to tug and pull at me. At last one of them took my leg, lifted it up over Bulbul's back. Tai and the men held me—I couldn't stand. I managed a last pat on Bulbul's fat side and his brown eyes rolled showing their white rims. He had been such a sweet, safe pony. Tai kept saying, "Push your legs forward." Feeling began to come back with my weight on them, but at the hotel door, Tai yelled for a bearer to help me up the stairs. Once in our room, she ordered the fire made and hot water brought, then left to pay off the mardoors.

When she came back, she began to rub my legs. "My poor Akka. Twenty two miles on ponyback on a rough trail was too much for you."

The fire was made and I could hear the thump of the pails set down in the bathroom. Tai's loud order had got prompt results. Between us we got off my clothes, hot water was poured over me. I was put on the bed for more massage. Heat was pouring out from the little stove. By the time Tai had used hot water on herself, I was able to move and ease myself down the stairs and across to our late dinner. When we came back, I stuffed the stove full, it took just a few sticks, and this time Tai said nothing.

Tai was asleep the minute her prayers were done,

but I kept my eyes open, watching the stove until the glow went out of it. My head was still spinning with fatigue, and I fell asleep and dreamed that I was falling down the mountainside, not hitting rocks but bouncing along on the soft green outstretched arms of the big evergreens, and on the soft tops of the pointed firs.

II

The next morning after breakfast, Tai wanted to walk along the Liddar River, back of the hotel. The path down was steep, the grass tufty, most of the ground bare and rocky. There was a stout fence below. The Liddar spread wide just above us with a low concrete dam, the source of the power for the dim electric lights. The water came white over the dam; enormous strength flowed down from the Himalayan mountains. Almost hidden in the trees, we could see the brown square roof of the electric plant. The dam and the roof were the only signs of man. Low hills folded into one another, covered with pointed firs, masses of blue-green. Along their crests marched a single line of trunks and tops; light came through to make them individuals. Mist and fog clouded the sky so that there was no view of the distant high snow peaks.

There was no gate, just an opening farther down in the fence. Tai and I did not talk when we looked at nature, but our minds and hearts were close at those moments. We walked over, through the gap, down to the bank of the Liddar, Tai reaching her hand back to help me. We looked at the green and blue water, reflecting the blue-green shadow of its guardian hills. We walked slowly, far up and back.

When we came into the hotel yard, we saw a couple of men with bulging sacks. "Walnuts," Tai said and walked over to them briskly. They opened their big sacks full of large English walnuts. Tai took a couple,

cracking them easily, pushing her thumb against them as she held them in her palm. She gave me kernels and ate some herself, they were barely ripe. She began to talk to the men, they answering back. I felt certain some bargaining was going on although Tai always said, "I will not 'higgle'." I took a little secret delight because this give and take could be nothing but the give and take of buying and selling. All at once she gave a quick sharp clap to her hands; the bargain was done. The two men in their long, full shapeless pants, their tunics, vests and shawls, all a grimy color, hoisted the two bags and carried them to the hotel steps. Tai paid them there and began shouting for the bearer to carry the two full bags of nuts up to our room. She was jubilant.

"Now," she said, "we will have plenty of fresh nuts for Divali." She had bought them too for half the amount she would pay down in India, and these were this year's crop.

This was a good moment to get her to go shopping. We started off in a gay mood. The rug merchant was out, his round little cap covering his hair, rubbing his hands together as we came along. Even the skins of these Moslem merchants seemed oily. We looked through all the rugs again, but I did not have much trouble with the merchant or with Tai, buying the chinar-leaved green rug for her, and quickly selecting a small rug in chinar leaf for myself. Most of the rugs were chain stitch but a few were wool appliquéd on wool with some embroidery. I took a small one of these too. Tai said, "My rug will be a Divali gift." The merchant had his servant carry the rugs back to the hotel. We went on to the tailor's shop.

The Kashmiri outfit was done and I was pleased. I hadn't, however, ordered the white muslin liner for the tunic; now there was no time to make it. The shop next door was open for the first time. It was a shallow little hole with three silversmiths squatting at work. They were heating silver in a ladle over a charcoal brazier, then pouring it into molds. It made a thin shell of silver, coming out in pins, buttons for shirt fronts, and

earrings. I tried to buy but they were all on order. Tai dragged me away saying we must go back to the Khalsa and get the porters to carry our holdalls and bags to the bus.

"Anyway," she said, "that is such thin cheap jewelry. Wait till you are down in India. Then you can buy heavy, good pieces."

Tai had settled our hotel account at lunch time. Two porters were waiting at the steps, and two bearers were there too hoping for a good tip. When we entered our room, a mouse went running in full view, several nuts were out on the floor and there was a hole in the corner of one of the walnut bags. Tai whipped her needle and thread out of her handbag and sewed up the hole with a few stitches, but she left the nuts on the floor for the mouse to eat after we had gone. In the hall, our friends flocked around us; they had exchanged addresses with Tai, and they were urging us to get in touch with them if we came to their cities. The bearers were genial too; I had coaxed Tai to give them tips enough to make them happy by saying, "After all, Tai, they do not bring so much hot water for Indian guests, and think of the number of times that they have brought wood."

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The driver was in his seat in the bus when we got on, but he got out to direct the tying of our luggage on the rack on top of the bus. Other passengers came straggling in. Pahalgam was almost deserted now for winter. Bulbul and his mate would be soug on the little farm with the brothers.

The bus turned around on the little street and we were away from Pahalgam, rolling down the gently sloping road, looking out again at the stream tumbling down beside us, at the rocky slopes thick with evergreens. The bus was to make no stops on the return trip. Soon we were down where the stream was channeled off to irrigate the rice fields. Now there were

chinar and mulberry trees. When we passed by the few little huddles of houses that were villages, Kashmiris were back from their day's work in the paddies, standing about watching to see the bus go by. Tai was quietly asleep, but I looked out the window. The sun was behind the mountains and it was dusk. I was not conscious of the roar and rattle of the bus as easily, gently we slipped down from Pahalgam.

Lights were bright in the compound of the bus station when we drove in, and it was crowded with travelers as usual. Tai was wide awake, and held firm in having two porters. When we walked out to the tonga, each of them had a big suitcase on his turbaned head, a fat holdall on top of that, and clutched in front of him with both arms, a big sack of nuts. In the tonga, we had to have one of the suitcases under our feet, the space beside the tonga wallah was stuffed with our baggage. We went tipping along the street, the heavy bags and our weight making the rickety old tonga on its two wheels sway.

The manager was all smiles at the hotel. Our room was ready. Raj came in at once with tea and cakes and our kangris, hot with coals, to put under the table, saying he had missed us and wished that we could stay longer.

Against Tai's advice, when we came back from dinner, I asked the manager if he would have his friend bring the Kashmir shawls to the hotel. He tossed his head with its high Persian lamb cap, his long nose sharp in the front of his face. Angrily, he said, "At first you were so eager to buy . . ." then stopped. I think Tai's Hindu presence checked him. He said no more.

The day we were to leave Kashmir, Tai was up earlier than usual. Always she said, "Five o'clock is my habit," but this time it was just four by my watch. Prayers, baths, breakfast were got through with speed, for the station wagon was scheduled to leave the Transport Headquarters at seven. Tai had all the packing done, except for buckling the bedrolls, the night before. She had got most of the nuts into the enormous willow

hamper that she had bought; the rest she stored in one of the willow baskets, tying the bag over the top to keep the nuts in. Our other purchases had been tucked into our suitcases or rolled with our bedding. Raj had tears in his eyes as the tonga was loaded, the child's willow chair put on top. I kept my hand on it to keep it from falling out.

We had return tickets so we were able to go directly to the station wagon. Tai stayed outside to get our luggage on; there was an argument over our baskets and the chair, but at last they were lashed on top along with the bulky luggage of the other passengers. There was one other woman, she was with her husband, an Indian army officer and two men for passengers, so we were not crowded.

We started as usual a little late, I dreaming of the past as we rode down the aisle of tall trees. The Kashmiri men and women were cutting rice in the fields, boys were running along the road under their tentlike loads of rice straw. The fertile countryside was a beautiful pattern of paddies, trees, Kashmiris, with blue-green heights and snow peaks around them looking down over all. Before we started to climb the mountain, a line of a dozen women was standing beside the road. Our driver brought the station wagon to a halt. The women, a ragged, dirty lot with the full skirts and embroidered blouses of nomads, crowded up to every window, holding up their hands.

Tai said, "They are not begging; they are asking for medicine."

"I haven't anything but a little aspirin," I said, but one of the men in the seat in front of us was getting out a flat case he had carried inside the station wagon with him. He climbed out and used the hood of the car as a counter, the women crowding around him. Out of a bottle, he handed a few pills about, the women promptly putting them in their mouths, making faces as they sucked them instead of swallowing. An older woman, her greasy braids graying, her face withered and brown like a nut, sat by the roadside, a young woman support-

ing her. She looked woefully ill. The man poured some pills into a bottle. He locked his case and taking it in one hand went over to the sick woman. He took a pill out of the bottle, dropped it into her grimy claw. Then she began to pat her stomach and beat on her chest. He lectured again, shaking the pill bottle up and down. Then he gave it to the old woman, her hand tightening around it.

He got into the station wagon and we were off. "What was that?" I asked. He explained that he was the medical officer for the district. Most of his time was spent in inspection of villages, but these people knew his schedule, and he was supposed to stop when they came to the roadside and do what he could for them. He mostly handed out aspirin tablets, but the old lady was really ill. He thought she had a malignancy, but perhaps it was pneumonia. He had given her antibiotics. He had been as stern with her as possible, but if it was pneumonia, and the first pill made her feel better, then she would promptly take all the rest at one time for a quick cure or perhaps someone would offer her a few annas, and she would sell the pills.

"We do what we can for them but it is quite hopeless."

Conversation now turned to making a stop at the source of the river Jhelum at Verinag. Each of us would have to pay a small sum extra to the driver for his time and for the extra petrol. All were agreed so we turned off the mountain road to drive the extra miles to the spring. To the other passengers, all of them Hindu, this would be a pilgrimage to a religious spot, Verinag Spring. To me it was romantic, a place where the Emperor Jahangir had built a palace, where Shah Jahan, who built the Taj Mahal, had played as a child.

As we climbed out of the station wagon, I was aware that Verinag, the most famous of the Kashmir springs, still was caught between Hindus and Mohammedans; it was a most sacred spot to the Hindu, now under their protectorate, but its precious waters flowed into Pakistan, making their fields fertile.

We stood by the grassy square, the water rushing past us amid the ruins of castle and garden, but soon we entered the enclosure of the spring, under the stone with Jahangir's name. Inside we found the huge ancient octagon, ringed with the twenty-one high arches, with niches at the pool level, in a wall of stones. Open to the sky, the water held by its retaining wall, reflected blue, dark in its cold depths, the water was smooth and shining, its only motion a swell as the sacred trout snapped at insects. Tai stooped down, cupping her right hand full, letting the water fall back drop by drop. The Hindus made no prayers, and they engaged in no conversation about the sacred spring of Verinag. Slowly we walked around the octagon. In some of the cells, there were the ashes of recent fires.

"Tai, do people stay here now?"

"The guard will permit holy men on pilgrimage to shelter themselves here. No one else can stay."

Once around, we left directly; we still had the mountain to climb. As soon as we were back on the main road, we started up along the switchbacks, up the steep grades, around the corners where you felt the hands of death reaching up to snatch you from the narrow ledge. The ride was just as thrilling as our entrance, but not as smelly for this time all were adults and none of us up-chucked. This side of the mountain the road was steeper but shorter.

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It was past noon when we came to Banihal Pass. Our driver stopped for us to get out and to have a farewell view of the valley.

I stood looking down at the verdant beauty lying in the loop of the river Jhelum, the beauty the ancient weaver-artists wove into their shawls. And I thought I too had been caught in the age-old conflict of Kashmir. My Hindu Tai had taken me there, but the wily Moslem merchants had made impossible for me the purchase of a shawl.

This time our station wagon went through the tunnel; the rock slide had been cleared. On the other side, we began to see workers and to pass army trucks—some with material, some with soldiers.

We passed the barrier, the arm of the law that had held us back on our coming up. There were many soldiers in the barracks by the road. We could see back of the line of trees the rest house where we had spent the night. The nomads we had seen encamped there were gone. We saw no orange-bearded men with their flocks of sheep and goats; all of them were down now in their winter pastures. Back and forth we went on the switchbacks. The danger of the road always with us; the stout strong arms of the driver held the car on the narrow ledge. We passed the entrance to the new, lower tunnel. Our driver proceeded slowly among the trucks and workmen. I saw again the weary line of little boys, their heads heavy with the mat trays of cement.

Our fellow travelers asked about food. Just below the new tunnel the driver turned off into the narrow path that plunged up until we stopped before a Dak bungalow. We were expected and the meal was ready.

An eight year-old boy stood on the verandah, a small monkey on his shoulder. At the sight of us, it jumped and hid behind a chair, cowering at the length of its chain. I stopped beside it coaxing; it crept into my arms; it was shivering. The boy jerked it away by its chain. Tai was urging me, saying that we must eat. I raced through my food, excused myself, and went back to the porch. Two annas to the boy put the monkey in my arms. It clung to me like a frightened child. The boy told me that he had had it only a few days. "I pull hard on its chain but it doesn't do what I say," the boy complained.

Tai was short with me when we got back into the station wagon. "Surely it was no harm for me to comfort the pet monkey," I said. She didn't answer me. Tai talked about Hanuman, the monkey god, when she told me Hindu legends, but she did not like live monkeys. When at last our station wagon drove into its parking

space beside the hotel in Jammu, we got out into a noisy confusion of buses and other station wagons. This was where we had had our noon meal on the way in and I dreaded the thought of sleeping there. Timidly, I said, "Isn't there a better place to stay?" Tai's stomach, now giving her constant trouble, must have been disturbed by the rough mountainside. She may have considered the monkey an ill omen; at the least she was disgusted that I had handled it for she, like all Indians, had a constant fear of rabies, of worms, of disease. It is their custom not to touch or handle any animal. Tai, already low in body, took my asking for other quarters as a blow to her Hindu pride. Her body stiffened with indignation. I hurriedly looked around. The hotel was quite bright with lights outside. All around us Jammu spread out in roofs and spires of temples.

Quickly I added, "Of course, this is all right, Tai. We must get a room or they will be gone." She was exasperated again when she heard of the large number of rupees we had to pay for a cavernous suite, all that was left. There were five beds in the big room. It must have been designed for a Moslem traveling with his four wives. In the bathroom, there was the usual tin basin and commode setup, but in the dressing room there were four dressing tables in a row.

After a greasy meal on a stained tablecloth amid noise and confusion, we went up to the dirty room. Tai had fought with our driver to get our carryalls unleashed from the top of the station wagon so we had those to spread over the thin filthy mattresses. The hotel manager had given us a key, but the door would not lock, so we tugged one of the beds in front of it. Tai, weary and not well, took it out in saying harshly when I lay down on the bed and began to cry, "Don't be such a child, Akka." Then she began to pray her Hindu prayers.

I could hear many temple bells in the distance. I felt afraid, alone. I was a guest in India, but I had not ob-

served their rules of decorum, and I was being paid for it. Tai's displeasure crushed me.

I slept fitfully but Tai was gentle with me when I awoke. Through with her prayers and bath she hurried me to bathe and dress. "This trip was too hard for you, Akka," she said.

After a hasty, wretched breakfast, we set off in the station wagon, rattling with speed. Even on this easy road we did not visit with the other passengers. It was Tai's place as an elder to initiate conversation. I knew when she did not talk that her stomach was still bothering her. We passed the customs stop quickly. The other passengers had their entry sheets stamped. I had again to go to the makeshift room with the official. He had his servant get his ledger out. He stamped his seal beside my name and stamped my entry permit with no questions, so soon we were back in the car. As we came down the easy slopes from Jammu, there were fewer trees, and by the time we reached Pathankot there was the scrubby growth, the poor small fields of India about us; we were again where there was no water for irrigation.

Tai must have had the plan in mind, but she did not propose it until we were out of the station wagon, said good-bye to the other passengers and were following our porters into the station.

"Akka, I believe that we can get a bus to Amritsar, see the Golden Temple, and be back by five. The *Kashmir Mail* is scheduled to leave at 5:35. It will be hard to get up here again and I want you to see the Golden Temple."

"What can we do with all this luggage?" I asked.

By that time, we were through the station, walking down the platform.

"We can check it; it will be perfectly safe."

She herded our porters into a large room, half of it a stout wire cage with padlocked door. In a few

minutes our holdalls, baskets, suitcases, the chair were locked in, Tai had checks for them, and we were on our way back up the platform and back out into the square with the buses. We found that we could go at noon, reaching Amritsar at 1:30 P.M. and catch the bus back at 3:30 P.M. We would be back at 5:00 P.M. with half an hour to get our baggage.

Tai bought the tickets and we had lunch in the same dirty little eating place beside the station.

Amritsar

WHEN WE CLIMBED ON THE BUS for Amritsar, a shaky feeling came over me, and while Tai said nothing, and no change came over her face, I could tell that she was not pleased with the situation. Shaky was the word to use for the bus too; it was small, old, and broken down. Every seat was full, the passengers poor Hindus and Sikhs, thin men, dhotis and shirts grimy, the few women in coarsest cotton saris, grimy too. We were out of the cool mountain air of Kashmir, down in the Punjab where it was hot and everyone on the bus was sweating; the air, to say the least, was stinky. We were well up in front and I did not dare turn around to stare. Before we had time to think, the bus was off at a slow speed, but rattling and shaking.

"Akka," Tai said, "what have I got you into?"

Stoutly I replied, "Tai, I wanted to ride on every kind of transport and see all kinds of people. This is interesting." But inside myself I feared that the bus would break down.

The narrow road had a hard surface; ours was the

only motor vehicle on it. There were a few large old trees by the side of the road, a few Indians, poor like the ones on the bus, standing under them. The bus would stop, two or three passengers would shuffle out and three or four push on, dropping an anna or two in the bus driver's hand; they too were going just a short distance. At one stop, an old Indian man with scraggly gray hair pushed up the step into the bus, behind him a young girl, her eyes cast down. They were pushing into the seat just across from us when I discovered that they had a young goat between them, holding it close on the floor. It had betrayed its presence by a loud "Baa." Tai, whose face had been turned to the window, in stony silence, gave a quick look at the sound, and said, "Disgusting." I said, "We'll soon be in Amritsar" soothingly; I was looking straight ahead. Tai, I could tell, was furious. She did not want me to see India at its worst. I could feel the eyes of all the passengers on me; they were not indifferent to an American woman, and I felt plainly that they did not like Americans.

Now we began to see water standing along the roadside, and now flooded fields. Somehow I did not relate this water to the snowstorms in the mountains in Kashmir, nor to the fact that planes had been able to fly into Kashmir only one day while we were there; but as we rode along there was more and more water lapping up close to the road.

We came into a town of considerable size and I said brightly to Tai, "Amritsar," but she said, "No," it would be another thirty minutes. This town had been a big textile center before the partition, but now the mills were in distress. We passed factories, most of them with British names, most of them deserted. "These are woolen mills," Tai explained. "The British pulled out, and these were great centers of Moslem rioting." She didn't mention the later quarrels between the Hindus and the Sikhs and I didn't know that Amritsar was the spiritual capital of Sikhism. I did know that Sikhs were a distinct sect; I remembered the turbaned man on the train, his whiskers caught tight under his chin in a

little net up to his ears. Tai had mentioned then that Sikhs never cut their hair, so they always wore a turban to cover it. She had also said that Sikhs always carried a knife in their belts, as our man on the train had, but she hadn't told me that all baptized male Sikhs regard their sect as a military fraternity similar to the Knights Templar of the Middle Ages, that they are known as the Khalsa, the master's own, and wear the five signs beginning with the letter K: Kesh (uncut hair), Kangha (a comb), Kacha (a pair of shorts), Kara (an iron bracelet), and Kirpan (a sword).

I looked at my watch; it was almost 1:30, we were due in Amritsar. I realized then what a tight schedule we were on, and the bus was creeping along.

Tai said curtly, "We will just have time to go for a quick look at the Temple."

At last, we were in the winding narrow streets of Amritsar, crawling along narrow streets full of tongas, rickshaws, people, more than a half-million population. The people, the streets and the low buildings all were filthy poor. Finally our bus pulled up, and we were up on our feet, eager to get to the temple. We were quickly swept out from the bus in the forefront of the passengers into the noise and the confusion of the street. There wasn't a sign of a taxi, just one tonga standing there, a bony horse and a rickety cart. Tai stood hesitating. "Akka, I can't have you ride in that."

"It's our only chance to get to the temple," I said so we walked over. Tai had quite lengthy words with the tonga wallah. "Stupid fellow," she said. We got in, sitting on the edge of the seat, holding our silks—my silk suit, Tai's silken sari—as much away as we could from the dirty vehicle.

The driver gave a dispirited flick of his whip, and the horse was off, without raising his head, just barely moving. After the quick trot of the Kashmir ponies, the slow speed of this horse was exasperating. Tai called "Chalo" in a sharp voice, but we kept on at a slow pace through innumerable winding alleys. Tai began to yell at the driver; he said nothing but at last made

a quick turn, stopped the horse, and got out pointing up at a small wooden temple. Tai was out of the tonga like a flash, now really berating him.

I, foolishly, spoke. "Tai, that isn't the Golden Temple."

My words were fuel to the fire. Tai was holding out annas to the man; he was saying "One rupee," she was all over him with words. Then she flung the money on the ground and said, "Come, Akka," and we set off on foot pushing our way down the crowded street looking this time for a bicycle rickshaw. In moments we found one; when Tai said "The Golden Temple," the young Indian steadied the cycle while we quickly climbed in. Tai kept saying "Chalo, chalo," telling him that there would be extra money for him if he got us to the temple and back to the bus station by 3:30. Almost afraid to look, I did take out my watch. It was 2:15.

Now the streets were steep, downhill, and we coasted along at a fast pace, still turning and winding from narrow alley to narrow alley as in a maze; Indian smells and sounds, as well as people, were all about us. It was still quite a few minutes before we stopped at an impressive marble façade. There was still no view of a Golden Temple, but I knew that this was the place from the way Tai hurried up the steps calling, "Come, Akka!" We crossed the wide platform, but as we started in the entrance, a tall Indian in a bright blue turban and blue sash barred our way with a long pointed pole with a steel head. Tai, already in a temper, began at once an argument. He held us to one side letting a steady stream of Indians pass in. I could see steep steps down and below a marble walk, awash with water.

"What is the matter, Tai?" I kept saying

Tai kept on arguing with him in Hindi. At last she said, "They will not let you enter, Akka." And this was the Golden Temple of the Sikhs with four doors opening out in four different directions, offering welcome to all without distinction of caste or creed. "The best I can do is that they will let you go down the steps; from

there you can look across the lake at the temple, but you will have to take off both your shoes and stockings to do that."

I was dazed, and angry at the treatment, but speed to reach the bus was in my mind. So with no argument on my part I said, "All right."

The guard herded us back to where attendants were dipping water from overflowing basins, pouring it over the feet of the people. Tai kicked off her sandals, leaving them with the heap of other sandals and had water poured on her feet. I slipped out of my slippers, pulled up my skirt and snapped my garters loose right in the men's faces, pulled off my hose, then quickly I dipped one foot, then the other into one of the basins. Horror at this act of pollution rose to their faces, but Tai was already off at breakneck speed, I after her, down the steps.

"Go on, Tai, go into the temple. I will wait."

The guard was rushing after me; by the time I was down on the marble walk, he was ahead of me, his pike barring my progress. Before me blue water lapped the marble sides of the huge square pool called Amritsar, "pool of nectar." In the center of the blue water stood the Golden Temple. It was truly golden, its copper walls covered with gold leaf. It was unbelievable, a golden plaything dreamed up by Oriental fantasy; its reflection was so golden on the water it seemed double size. The sound of intoned chants came across the water. I looked at the golden beauty and longed to see the walls inside the temple, inlaid with precious stones of various colors in designs of birds and flowers. And I remembered that the sweepers here used brooms of peacock feathers. Tai's little figure was hurrying along, pushing her way through the crowd, around the side of the lake across the white marble causeway. Then I lost sight of her as she entered the temple. It was just moments when she came out the other side, across the other causeway, and on around the pool back to me.

"Oh, Akka, if only you could have seen it. I am so

shamed that they did not allow you to enter the temple. I, a Hindu, was welcomed at churches of all denominations in the United States."

My feet had been cold with anger as I stood there, held back from the Golden Temple by the blue-turbaned Sikh but now my heart warmed as it always did to Tai. I thought, a good tip would have bought my way in, but Tai would not buy my way into temples.

We hurried up the steps, Tai holding my hand, guarding me, as she always did, against accident. Our rickshaw boy was just outside, quickly we were in and away up the steep street. He had to pedal hard. We were only a few blocks along, when the vehicle began to drag. Tai began to sputter as he stopped, and got down; we could see at once that there was a flat tire. Tai began to yell that he get us another rickshaw. I sat silent in the uproar; a crowd was gathering. I did not dare inflame Tai more by looking at my watch, but I was thinking that the *Kashmir Mail* would be leaving Patankot at 5:30. We would be in an awful mess if we did not make it; not only would we lose the cost of our reservation, but worse, there was no provision for a Westerner to stay the night except on a bench in the station, and we might not be able to get a reservation on tomorrow's trains; as usual in India, they were crowded full.

Tai's force was greater than the boy's; he broke through the crowd and went running up the street. There I stood, rigid, grim with what my family calls my early American look. Tai too was like a statue, scorn, anger frozen on her face. Our silks and our black and brown moneybags kept the crowd from touching us, but there was an undercurrent of sound in their voices that made me uneasy. It was only an instant till we saw another rickshaw hurtling down the street, our boy with another in it. The crowd parted, Tai put a couple of rupees in our first boy's hand; enough so he didn't protest and inflame the crowd of Sikhs against the Hindu and American women; we were in the second rickshaw and off, the new boy pedaling hard up the hill.

It seemed endless as we wound about again through

the alleys of Amritsar, but at last we could see the bus; it was full and looked as if it were starting. Our boy gave a last burst of speed, we were out and up on the steps of the bus before Tai turned back to pay the boy. The bus driver was yelling. He had already started the motor, and he started the bus before we were into the seat just behind him, vacated by his order, I felt, because two Indians in their long dirty dhotis were shuffling down the aisle, lurching with each step, to the back of the bus.

Tai and I exclaimed a little over the flooded fields, but mostly we were concerned with the many stops the bus was making. Each halt was exasperatingly slow as passengers shuffled out, and almost always a few pushed in. The sun was far down in the sky; now I kept my watch out; it was evident that we were behind schedule. Tai seemed passive, but I, in growing fear that we would miss our train, began to plan and push.

I leaned forward, and yelled in the driver's ear, "Hurry, we have to reach Patankot by 5:30 for the *Kashmir Mail*." He made no reply, but I was certain that he understood.

Tai said sharply, "Akka, do not speak to him; it is useless; he has to let these passengers on and off."

I tried to think of some way to manage, but only obstacles to our journey came to mind. "What about our luggage? It will take time to get it from the check room?"

Tai replied, "You go directly to the train, find the conductor; he will hold the train while I am getting the luggage."

The minutes dragged on, it was 5:20, it was 5:25. Suddenly I remembered, there was a U-shaped drive before the station; the bus would circle around to the bus stop. If the driver would let us off at the first leg of the U, we would walk directly into the station; it would save several minutes. I leaned forward again. "Please stop, and let us off at the first entrance." The driver shook his head. I leaned closer, and said in a much lower voice, "Here is a rupee for you, if you will

let us off there." I heard Tai say, "No, Akka," in a very cross voice. I didn't turn my face toward her. The man's hand was back almost instantly, and in an instant I had the rupee in it.

I was looking out sharply at the dark street, at the crowds pushing by the little shops. I got up on my feet, Tai tugging at my skirt, again saying, "Akka, no." The rattling old bus suddenly crashed to a halt, rocking me back on my heels; I was down the steps in a flash, running. Behind me Tai was calling loudly, "Akka, no, Akka, no," her voice dropping behind me as I kept right on with the fleetness of my youth. My breath was coming fast as I covered the hundred yards, holding my big black bag to my side. I rushed through the station; out on the platform the *Kashmir Mail* was still there. All the doors to the compartments were open, the passengers were off walking about, incoming passengers having their trunks and bags carried in by porters. Still I rushed, almost running along the side of the train looking for the conductor. I turned my face to Indian after Indian saying, "Please, where is the conductor?" Everyone ignored me; my breath was in gasps, but I felt certain they understood. Tears began to slip out of my eyes. No one was willing to help me.

The last of the passengers were beginning to get on the train. Tai, I knew, had not run, and it would take time for her to get our luggage from the check room. In desperation, I put one foot in an empty compartment, one on the station platform. On Indian trains, there is not a step up; the floor of the compartments is level with the station platform. The people to whom the compartment belonged came to get in. I flattened myself as much as I could, but held my place even as they loudly complained. I got my bag open, and got out our tickets so that I could find the number of our compartment. Tai and I always divided things for safety. In this instance, I had the tickets, she had the baggage checks. Once I had the number I started along the train running again, looking at the number on each compartment. Everyone was on, it looked as if the train would

start at any instant. Compartment after compartment was full, I kept calling, "Conductor! Conductor!" but no one helped me. Then I found an empty coupe, the number was right, I looked at the card posted outside, "Mrs. K. Sathe, Mrs. W. B. Armstrong." I planted my feet wide apart, one inside, one out, breathing hard, tears slipping out again, wondering if I would put a foot in, or out, if the train really started.

All the passengers were on now, the train was huffing and puffing. I looked back; clear down the platform Tai had just come into view. Before her were two porters with our small mountains of luggage. Beside her was the *train conductor*. They came on at a leisurely pace, chatting together. I pulled my feet in, close together now, exasperation, anger rose in me, instantly drying my tears. As the little procession drew near, Tai swaying gracefully along called out to me in a low voice, "Come outside, Akka, while the porters arrange our baggage." She stepped in the doorway after them, giving them some directions, paid them, exchanged a few felicitous remarks with the conductor who bowed us into our coupe with ceremony. Tai said, still in sweet voice, "The conductor will see that the order is given for two dinners to be put on for us at the next station." By this time, she had the double door shut and bolted, the train was moving. She came and sat beside me on the wide green leather seat, turned angry eyes at me and said in a hard voice, "Akka, you are a disgrace, running and crying like a child." I made no answer but began to cry again.

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It was not far to the next stop where the waiter came to our door. His uniform was dirty but the big white napkins covering the stainless steel thals were spotless. Underneath there was hot chicken, rice, curry, vegetable, pudding—a good meal. The train started, jolting along. When I didn't at once begin, Tai said gently, "Eat, Akka, you are too tired. This hot food will make

you feel better. When we are done, we can put our trays on the floor by the door, make our beds, and be ready to sleep by the time the train makes the next halt." Once we were done eating, she unbuckled my holdall, saying, "Go into the bathroom and get ready for the night; this time I will fix your bed for you."

I laid myself down gladly on the hard green seat, there was a British comfort in its firm, practical construction. Tai was on the shelf over me, climbing up and down the little ladder at the end, as she arranged her bed. I didn't hear her "Good night, Akka," or hear her open the door at the next stop for our dishes to be taken off. It seemed still night to me when I felt her shaking me, and heard her saying, "You must wake up, Akka, you will just have time to dress before we are in the Delhi station."

Delhi 2

OUR TRAIN DREW IN SLOWLY along the Old Delhi station platform. It was as always alive, crowded with passengers, large groups of relatives and friends seeing them off, large groups waiting to welcome incoming passengers, vendors with stands and carts selling food and novelties, but in the forefront were the porters in their faded red shirts and turbans, fifty strong. At sight of my American face, we were mobbed. Tai drove off all but two until they claimed that they were allowed to carry only three pieces of luggage each. Quickly they called a third porter, and we were racing off behind them. As we moved through the crowds, I kept as close as I could to Tai. She would not let me take her arm or cling to her sari so I was constantly being pushed away from her, and frantically scurrying to keep my place in our own little procession, the porters walking one behind the other. Just once Tai stopped to drop a coin in the upstretched hand of a blind man squatting beside one of the iron pillars that supported the roof. No beggars approached her and none came to me as

I kept close as I could in her shadow. Outside we took a large taxi, the driver the usual stout turbaned Sikh. The driver, like all of them, drove through the crowded streets at such speed you simply had to resign yourself to your fate. Fleets of bicycles were on their way to work. Other taxis, cars, and buses were whizzing by. There were some rickshaws, a good many tongas, a few bullock carts. Not even the numerous sacred cows slowed us. They didn't yield ground, some were lying down in the midst of the traffic, but the driver deftly dodged around them.

We spent the morning resting, then Tai and I walked out for the doorman to call a taxi. It was too early for lunch at the Imperial Hotel so we decided to eat at the Volga on Connaught Circle, just half a block from Hamilton House: American Express headquarters. We wanted to be through earlier for our trip to Humayun's Tomb and Kutub Minar. We had been told that the Volga was a good and a fashionable restaurant. We found it behind large windows, covered with heavy curtains. A blast of cold air hit us as we entered. Inside there was an overhead effect with red; there were dim lights on the many tables, white damask cloths almost to the floor, the many mirrors on the walls reflecting the red ceiling and the white tables. A six-piece orchestra was readying, half of the instruments seemed Western, half Oriental. There was nothing Russian about the place in spite of the name Volga; it was a smart international restaurant. A few Indian men were at tables, cocktails were being served. Prohibition was only on Tuesday in Delhi. Tai ordered Indian food, I American. As we ate I exclaimed over its excellence. Soon a crowd began to arrive, slick looking Indian businessmen who could afford such prices. Most of them were in groups, talking business over cocktails as they had luncheon; there were a few men eating with lovely secretaries, and there were a few girls in twos, their saris pulled tight to show their forms, their dark eyes looking sidewise at the men. Tai ignored these situations and enjoyed the food.

Leaving the Volga, a taxi, with turbaned driver, dashed up for us as soon as we reached the edge of the sidewalk; all the taxi drivers in Delhi seemed to be stout Sikhs, driving the cars like madmen going to battle. The stream of traffic was heavy until we were on the outskirts of Delhi. The road branched there, the traffic going along the main, tree shaded highway; the side road, bare of trees, seeming to go out into barren desolate country. Just at the branch of the road there was a Marwari woman striding along, a tall stout woman, handsome in her rough way, her enormously full skirt swinging as she walked, her ankles heavy with crude silver ankle rings. She had half a dozen silver bracelets on each arm, a heavy necklace, a nose plug also of silver and under the end of her half sari over her head, I could see heavy silver rings in her ears.

"Tai, Tai, take her picture." Tai in a gala mood was willing to indulge me. An Indian never notices a character like this, so accustomed are they to the various ways of dressing. Indians use their film to snap historic temples and tombs with their own family well in the foreground. Tai called quickly to the driver; he had already started down the empty side road. He braked to a sudden stop and began backing the car in the same instant, coming to a sudden stop. We piled out; the Marwari woman had stopped, watching us. She carried some food in the folds of her sari, held tight to her by her left hand; with her right she was steadying three bundles on her head, her sweeper's broom on top of that. Tai spoke to her and stepped back to focus the Kodak. The woman's strong face was in a broad smile showing full her stout white teeth. Just at the moment Tai snapped the picture, the woman took her hand away from her bundles, but held it aloft in a gesture as graceful as the posture of a dancer.

My eyes took in not only the Marwari woman but the street scene, the bus crawling along behind two ox-carts in the stream of traffic. The bicycle in view was pedaled by a young Indian man, a young woman behind him, riding sideways on a tiny square seat fixed on the

guard of the rear wheel. The man was spinning his wheel at a good pace, but this girl, like all the many others I had seen poised behind men on bicycles, sat with easy grace as if a chair supported her. One hand barely touched the man for balance, her other arm and hand held a bundle of books tight to her. Her toes were thrust in her sandals, but the soles did not droop down; her sari fell neatly around her ankles, the palu was tucked in at the waist; the braid of her hair shiny with oil, hung down her back, not swinging out, and there was no fluttering of her sari or blowing about as they rode out of my sight.

"Akka, Akka," Tai was calling my attention. "See, there is another woman wanting her picture. It will be well to take a picture of more than one woman. I will stand by this other one." Tai I knew was practicing her Gandhi tenets of there being no caste when she stood so close in her silken sari, but still she was not touching the other woman.

This Marwari was older. She was a thin woman but strong, her full skirt was shorter, her ankles had each one heavy silver ring, but she had many bracelets on her wrists, a weighty necklace, and earrings under the end of her half sari that covered her head. As I looked at them to take the picture, Tai's smile was flashing and the Marwari woman was smiling too, a double row of white teeth gleaming. A woman in a sari with two children had stopped to watch, not realizing that she too was in focus. She looked with a sweet smile at Tai and the Marwari woman. The two-year-old baby girl, astride her shoulder, looked intently at them too. The child was steadying herself with one hand on the mother's palu-covered head. There was a little dress on her upper half but it did not cover her fat little buttocks. She too had silver rings on her ankles. The twelve-year-old boy stood shyly close to his mother. He was very dark, and very thin, peering around his mother.

Back in the car I began to ask Tai about our first stop. We were to see the stone tower, Kutub Minar, and close by, the ruins of Prithvi Raj Temple and the Iron Pillar. She could tell me nothing except that these were ancient monuments, and that this area was the center of Delhi at that time. I could remember a bit about the Iron Pillar, that it was pure iron, never rusty, and that scientists had never been able to figure how the metal had been so purified and how it had been cast in a single piece. There was a parking place for cars nearby, and a booth selling albums and pictures. Just ahead of us towered the Kutub Minar; quickly I found its picture in the album and read: "Kutub Minar, 238 feet high—379 stairs. This building was commenced by the Emperor Prithvi Raj and was completed by Firoz Shah Tuglac. Formerly there were six stories but now it has got only five." I looked up at Kut Minar, rosy stone with darker pink bandings, its sides crenellated, each section terminating in a balcony of stone intricately carved, each section narrowing in graceful proportion. It stood pink against the bright blue Indian sky, among the other ancient ruins. It was a graceful, slender thing, feminine in its color and form.

Tai at once wanted to climb it. On the other side there was an entrance door; inside stone steps curved up with an inner wall but no railings. "No, Akka, you must not try it." But I insisted. I could see people on the balconies that circled the stories. I said that I would go up to the first one to have the view and wait while she made the climb. Reluctant, she made me go ahead of her. The steps were crude blocks of stone, hollowed by the wear of hundreds of years, and so high I had to stretch and pull myself to get up them. I was breathless when we reached the balcony, both from climbing and from the closeness of the air. There were small slits that let in a little light but the air did not move or change inside. A number of Indians were circling the balcony; most of them young people. I clung close to the wall but Tai was hanging over the stone rail, high as it was.

Rested a little, and carried away with the climbing. I insisted on going up again. The steps were not quite so high, but narrower. A number of boys were climbing up rapidly and some boys were coming down with speed. I clung close to the wall; Tai had a hand back helping me up. I was shaking when we reached the second level. I said, "I can go on after I rest a little in the air." But Tai said, "No, Alla, this is not for you." I urged her to go on alone but she said, "Alla, you are trembling. I will not leave you." Looking down did make me dizzy. We made a slow descent.

Close by Kutub Minar there were tall ruins, arches of cut blocks of stone, walls covered with esoteric female figures, and there were portions of roof held up by elaborately carved stone pillars. The album had this information: "Prithvi Raj Temple was erected by Prithvi Raj and later Kutub-ud-din covered the pillars with plaster and gave the name of Kutub Mosque. Again plaster came down by itself to show the signs of Aryan civilization." Tai never voiced her thoughts in these ancient places but mine were wandering in those centuries before Christ when for hundreds of years Indians carved stones and built temples.

Walking on we saw the Iron Pillar. I read, "The iron pillar near Kutub Minar is made of solid, pure iron. It is 22 feet high and 16 inches in diameter and weighs 18 tons. This shaft never gets rusty." I, like all the other viewers, ran my hand up and down its shiny side. It was pleasant to see these past glories. We strolled on, Tai saying, "There it is. There is the sixth story of the Kutub Minar." The little last section stood there, a tiny stone tower among flower beds, as if it had been designed as a garden ornament but I wished that it was back in place, as the crown of the Kutub Minar.

Many Indian family parties were strolling about enjoying their ancient beauties on the lovely day. The men were in Western shirts and trousers, women in pale saris, boys in neat shorts and shirts, little girls in bright smocks.

"Humayun's Tomb," Tai said to the driver as we got

back in the car. It was not far till he stopped but in those few minutes I had reviewed Humayun in my guidebook. He, I knew, was the son of Babar. He had had to flee to Persia, there had married a girl of fourteen, Hamida Banoe, who gave birth to a son named Akbar at Amarkot in 1542. After a lapse of years Humayun again came to India to regain his lost position with only 15,000 horses and seized Punjab, Delhi, and Agra. Scarcely he had enjoyed his throne at Delhi for six months when he slipped down from the polished steps of his palace and died on January 24, 1556, leaving Akbar (my favorite emperor) a boy of fourteen. I opened the album and read, "Humayun's Tomb was erected by Akbar's mother, Hamida Begum, wife of Humayun, in the year 1557 A.D. at a cost of Rs 18 Lakhs on a site selected by Humayun himself."

Our car had halted, Tai was out saying, "Come, Akka." The elaborate entrance, the stretch of wall with arches, niches and decorations called a gate by Indians surprised me. Pictures show just the tomb. We walked in through the high arch over the stones, broken and worn. A guard inside in the dim coolness had cards for sale. Tai was impatient, but I bought and turned them over to read. The only information was that this was "Humayun's Tomb. The earliest Mogul architecture in India built by his wife."

We stood in the shade of the arch looking out at the wide double walk of stone, water running in a narrow channel between, with pools of water at intervals. At the end of the long vista the magnificent red sandstone building rose up against the sky, blue with clouds like a painted backdrop. There was an enormous four-square platform, three times head height about the building. Niches all along it, framed by Mogul arches; the red sandstone was so decorated with traceries of marble that it looked like the embroidered end of a shawl. Above this rose the main structure of the tomb, the center arch huge, two large but lesser arches on either side, and to crown it, the lovely dome of white marble, a soft round shape, the inspiration, it is felt, for

the dome of the Taj Mahal. Humayun lay in his long sleep under this marble bosom, warmed even in death by the love of his wife.

Tai and I walked within the tomb and about it. Slowly we enjoyed its beauty. Under the shade trees, on the lawns, Indian families had spread cloths and were having lunch and tea. Tai said, "Akka, we must go and call on Kamlabai. It is just the time when she will be coming home from her office."

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When we drove through the gate at Lady Irwin College, girls were strolling about in the paths in their long trousers of thin cotton material with long tunics over them. My mind was still with Hamida Banoe Begum, Humayun's wife. She too wore long trousers, a long tunic, and filmy scarf across her bosom, long ends falling loose behind. The girls too had chiffon scarves draped across their shoulders, although now this Punjabi dress was used by the girls for convenience in games. We passed a tennis court; the girls were serving, chasing balls, their scarfs were hung over one corner of the net.

Kamlabai was just going up the steps of her house as our taxi pulled into her driveway. She welcomed us, her big body, strong face, a human tower of strength. She called to her cook to bring tea, telling us that she had an early dinner engagement, but urging us to come in for a little visit. She invited us to come back the next morning at ten for the first celebration of the opening of their nursery school. We left promptly, we too had to have our dinner early at the Imperial, for we planned that evening to visit Chandi Chowk, the bazaar in Old Delhi.

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Tai and I had kept our taxi waiting so there was no delay. Back at the Imperial, we rested in the comfort of

our room, then enjoyed our sumptuous meal in the dining room. We were always seated at the same table; the bearer made us feel that we were his special charges. He no longer asked our choice for dessert, but brought Tai and me two servings of ice cream.

It was still light when we walked out for the doorman to blow his whistle for a taxi. I was full of excitement. Bazaars roused the American mercantile instinct strong in me. Chandi Chowk, was once the richest bazaar in the world, but as we went under the old high gate from New Delhi into Old Delhi everything seemed poor and mean. Only the Red Fort towering high with its battlement walls was grand. My eyes came down from its towers. I could hardly believe what I was seeing—the wide grassy space before the walls was covered with marquees of every color, banners before them, and everywhere Indian families, bullock carts, bullocks, cows, buffalos, children running, cooking pots over little fires. There was the noise, the motion and the smell of a mass of people.

"Is it part of Divali?" I asked.

"No," Tai replied. "These are refugees from the Jumna flood. Don't you remember? This morning we saw the headline in the *Times of India*, 'Jumna flooding, thousands of refugees.'"

"But," I said, "this looks like a carnival with gay tents."

"The tents belong to the various religious communities in Delhi. They are used for gatherings, and for emergencies. They are set up here to administer relief just as the Red Cross does in the United States. The banners designate which areas are being handled by which community. See the men sitting back of the tables at each banner and the people queued up before them? Those are officials handing out tickets good for food, fuel, and grain." I looked back as our taxi sped on; this was flood in India.

Our taxi soon drew up to the side of the road and Tai started getting out. "Where is Chandi Chowk?" I asked.

"It is the street just to the left of us. We will have to walk to see but we'll have the taxi wait here for us."

Directly we turned into the narrow way, we were in bedlam. Dark ancient buildings hemmed in the sides, seeming so nearly to touch at the top that I wondered how the moon could ever look in to give Chandi Chowk its name, Moonlight Avenue. There was a rough stone walk, a street of cobbles and on its other side another walk. Shops crowded close on both sides, each one a stall, merchants were squatting on the walks, a few wares spread on a tray. Men, women, children were everywhere, crowding, pushing, laughing, filling Chandi Chowk. Tai was laughing too as she said, "Akka, this is India just before Divali." People were buying saris, shirts, jewelry. Paper lanterns, paper decorations, paper flowers, and toys were being sold. We crowded close to the sweet shops to see the sweetmeats arranged in spires and palaces for the Divali festival. The delicious sweets, which resembled rich fudge, were made of sugared honey and milk.

Tai shoved her way into a toy shop, the narrow shelves along one wall held a few toys but mostly there were cricket bats and balls. She selected good ones for her four grandsons. I said, "What about the girls?" she looked at me and said, "I'll get them something to wear." When I saw sweaters hanging out I insisted on stopping. They were machine made, but with quite a bit of style. Tai fell into the spirit of it in spite of my saying that I would buy the presents for the girls. We chose four of them, made long like coats, larger ones for Satish and Pramila, smaller ones for the one-year-old girls.

We passed a stall hung full of make-believe Raja's costumes, fronts elegant with glitter of gold braid and many colored sequins. I stopped, entranced, my mind full of the Mogul emperors. "My grandsons would love these to dress up in," I said. So, laughing, we bought two outfits, one red, one blue, then we added magnificent turbaned caps, huge domes of gold silk. We stopped just once more, Tai bending down to a thin,

frail old Indian man. On his little tray, he had the bright little shapes that Indian girls paste on their foreheads for beauty marks. We were pushed about as we stood buying from him: I could not see how his tray was kept free from the many feet. In the moment, he told Tai his story. He was a Hindu driven out of Pakistan; he and his wife lived like many other refugees, under some boards set up as a lean-to in one of the alleys off this street. All the money he had left was in these few bright bits of paper.

Carried away with the excitement of the crowd, we went to the end of the street, almost swept out into the motor traffic of another main thoroughfare. I thought when we turned back we would never be able to make our way against this human tide, but we found people were going in both directions. It was dusk now, kerosene flares burned before some of the shops, there were dim electric lights over the street. Tai and I began to weary of the constant push and noise but we were still laughing with the gaiety of the crowd when we emerged at the other end. "Akka, look at your hair." I put up my hand, most of my pins were gone, it was flying in every direction. Then I noticed my suit. Its damask silk was fastened down the front with a row of tiny jet buttons; three of them were gone. But Tai's hair and sari were tidy as usual. Our taxi pulled up beside us and we were still laughing as we got in.

2

Tai and I were up early the next morning with another full day ahead of us. It was against Tai's code of manners to tell me what to wear, so I judged the occasion by waiting until she took out her sari; then I would put on a suit to match. I did not expect her to put on one of her very best silks this morning, but when she did I quickly took out one of my best suits. Words

of praise were against her code too so she never said, "How nice you look today," but even without words I knew that this time she was satisfied with my choice of clothes. The sun was up, it would be pleasantly warm, and I could sense that we would enjoy today's events.

We left the Imperial at 8:15, but when we drove into Lady Irwin campus there were already many cars about. The nursery school celebration was to be held on the lawn in the angle of one of the main buildings. There were as many men in the audience as women; one of the reasons for the early hour was so that these lawyers, doctors, and business men could attend before going to their offices.

One of the girl ushers whispered to Tai. She turned to me. "Kamlabai has sent for me to sit on the platform."

"Will you speak?" I whispered.

No," Tai whispered back. "Raj Kumari, [her full name was Raj Kumari Amrutkour] our Minister of Health, is to give the address. She is one of our top women, born a royal princess, but lived the life with Gandhiji and all the rest."

First the nursery school children were paraded across the verandah, the announcer giving the name of each child. I was enchanted. All the little girls wore silken saris, earrings, golden bangles on their little wrists, and the little boys were magnificent in brocade tunics, satin trousers and turbans, blue, yellow, pink, no ordinary draping, these were miniatures of Rajahs' headdresses, bejeweled and with feathers.

I thought of the nursery school we had visited in Amravti. We had not seen the tuition children who attended mornings, but the charity children of the afternoons. The rags they arrived in had been taken off, they were dressed in their school uniforms, sitting in a circle, each on a little woven mat. Each child had a small tin mug in his or her hand. Their eyes were fastened on the two young teachers standing in the center. One of them had a metal jug—the other teacher would take a child's cup, hold it while it was poured half full of milk. The children sat solemnly, intent as

the round was made. Then at a signal the milk was drunk. Some drank it in a single gulp, a few sipped; not a drop was spilled. This was reconstituted dried milk, a gift from the United States, one of the most useful gifts that we are making to India.

I looked at the thin little faces, the legs just thin stems, the skinny little arms and asked, "But why don't you give them a full cup?"

The answer was, "The milk has to be divided for all India. This is our quota. The children are thankful to have even a half cup of milk."

And I remembered the many neat signs I had seen in every city, "*Montessori Kindergarten*." Tai had told me that the discipline of these schools too was very popular with Indian parents.

I brought myself back to the ceremony as Kamlabai was being introduced as *Directress of Lady Irwin College*. She spoke giving a history of the opening of the nursery school and its rapid growth. Then she introduced Raj Kumari, who rose, a tall, lovely but aging woman, her pale pink sari draped closely about her slender form, the *palu* over her head, not coming over her face but still giving the effect of shutting out the world. Raj Kumari spoke of the forward movement of Lady Irwin College in organizing a nursery school; then, letting her *palu* fall back off her head, she made an impassioned plea for these favored parents to be leaders in social work so that the conditions of all Indian children should be bettered. Her speech was as brief as it was forceful.

At one side, a table had been spread with a white cloth; fruit punch and cakes were being served. As parents rose and the chatter of the children began to be heard, girls were carrying plates to the speakers, and a girl came to me saying that I was to join them. There was a pleasant confusion, people coming up to chat with Raj Kumari and Kamlabai, Tai and I being included with introductions and chitchat. But quickly the celebration scattered, and Tai and I with them to our waiting taxi.

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us warmly saying, "How wonderful to see you, Tai. How was your stay in the United States? My husband is away now. He will be sorry to have missed seeing you."

Mrs. Jatar seated us then and began telling Tai that she had just been in Nagpur (the home town of both of them) to address a meeting of women university graduates.

"Oh Tai, I wish you could have been present. I intended to make a routine talk but as I stood there looking at them so satisfied with the fact that they held university degrees, I let them have it. I told them that women university graduates were not going ahead in the development of India as they should. Of course this was controversial. The minute I was through, discussion began." Then Mrs. Jatar began to tell Tai what this one and that one had said, all of them women whom both knew well. Mrs. Jatar continued, "I held my ground, but there was a lot of argument. Of course my speech was carried in the Nagpur papers and copied in the *Times of India*. Letters are still coming in about it." Tai had noted the clock on the wall; presently, when the fifteen minutes were up, she rose, but Mrs. Jatar made her sit down again. It was three-quarters of an hour before we left, and Mrs. Jatar was still saying, "Tai, let me tell you this before you go." But she, too, knew that her schedule was being thrown off by this interruption, and she let us go, first calling on her phone for one of her top men to show us through the offices. He was an older man, warmed by Tai's interest and knowledge of work of this kind. We made a thorough tour, the man filling Tai's hands with pamphlets and putting her name on the mailing list for several publications.

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Tai was in such a good mood that I asked if we could stop and look at the wares the Tibetans had spread for sale on the walk in front of the Imperial. She spoke to the driver and we got out. Buddhas,

winged lions, all sorts of oddments in brass and bronze were spread on the ground. I knew that these people and their wares were supposed to be fakes, the copper and brass from Birmingham, England. I looked at the women wearing dark, coarse woolen robes belted in with Tibetan striped wool aprons. Anyone could put on those clothes but they couldn't make their faces into that flat Mongolian countenance with the slanted eyes. The women stood there stolidly as I looked. Two men were lounging on the ground behind them. Yak butter had been a word that to me was the threshold of a strange world. Here were people out of it, greasy hair, greasy clothes, greasy with yak butter.

All at once Tai said, "Akka, see the lights." They were pierced copper globes about twelve inches in diameter. They had chains to hang from a ceiling, and a fat candle had sat in their base in Tibet, but it would be easy to suspend a cord with an electric bulb inside them. Tai longed for few things, but I knew at once she desired one of these. I began looking at them. Several had pieces broken, but one globe was perfect.

"How much?" I said.

"Thirty rupees."

"Akka, Akka," Tai broke in, "do not buy it, it is too much."

The men were up on their feet, one of them came close, I took out my rupees, gave them to him, and we walked laughing, around through the side garden into the Imperial, Tai still saying, "Akka, you do too much." Then she looked at the pierced copper globe; she could see light shining from it. "Akka, it will always be my family's special light for Divali."

Directly, we went down to lunch; Tai was urging me to eat plenty of Western food, so I had two ice creams. Back in our rooms, we packed our clothes, baskets, and nuts, all the things from Kashmir stuffed in and added to our carryalls and suitcases, and we now had the turbans from Chandi Chowk, the costumes, bats, sweaters, and Tai's lamp. "Tai," I said, "It is a

good thing there are always so many porters eager to carry." We didn't rest. Tai wanted to take me to Birla Temple and our train left for Mathura at six so we went out at once. Tai said "Small taxi" to the doorman. I teased, "We will have to have a large taxi for all our luggage to go to the train."

Madhu had taken us to the Birla Temple in Mathura our first evening there. The white marble, while ornately carved, had been calm in the dusk, and in the temple, the drums, the gongs, the priests blowing on the conch shell had seemed muted. Tai was eager for me to see Birla Mandir in Delhi. It had been built a year later than the temple in Mathura, in 1936-40, by the same industrialist, Ghanshyam Dass Birla. The minute our taxi pulled up, we stepped out and I saw the huge pink monstrosity, three deep rose phallic towers flaunting their ugliness in the bright sun. Round the outer walls booths were selling food cooked in stale oil. Where in Mathura incense had filled the air, here we had a stink.

As we walked up the high flight of steps to the cement elephants at the entrance, I thought this is just as with us, the newest is the largest, the gaudiest. Inside the temple, and the inner grounds, everything seemed distorted, confused. Tai pointed out the areas of the temple devoted to all the Hindu sects, and the shrine for the Buddhists. A few poor Hindus were moving about, children trailing after them. The gardens were filled with huge cement animals, their jaws open, children running in and out. Everywhere I could see electric lights and the three high towers of the temple were outlined with globes. At night, the light would be garish, the music raucous, and the stinky smell outside would carry in.

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Back at the Imperial, we called for porters and a big taxi. I had settled our bill at the desk at noon, but there was a long line of hands to fill with money by the

time we had our mountain of luggage loaded. Tai put a good sum in the hands of the chief doorman, saying, "You distribute."

Old Delhi station was full as usual, long trains on the many tracks, beggars, hawkers, travelers pushing everywhere in the din, the smell of food mingling with the smell of the crowd; it was utter confusion. Then Tai pushed the doors of the compartment shut and secured them. We were off with the usual clanking and roaring of the train. "Settle back and rest, Akka." Tai hunted my cushion out of the pile of luggage and put it at my back.

Mathura, 2

OUT OF THE TRAIN WINDOWS I could see sheets of water, shimmering in the dusk.

"Tai," I said, "there is so much water."

She looked and said, "Akka, remember we had rain in Kashmir, and there were such heavy rains and snows in the Himalayas that planes did not come in till our last day. Indians have worked hard at building bunds, dams, and diverting water into big canal projects to irrigate thousands of acres. But the Himalayas are so high and vast that great quantities of water still rush down over the plains and we do not as yet have all of it in control."

It was dark at eight o'clock, when our train pulled into Mathura station. Madhu was not on the platform to meet us. Tai had written him but we had had such bad luck with mail that Tai said, "Madhu has not received my letter. We will get a tonga and proceed by ourselves to the canning compound."

Porters had lifted our luggage off the train; Tai had held them with us on the platform while waiting. The

platform was still filled with people, all poor Indians with grimy saris and dhotis. Some were huddled in groups, crouched in easy positions, but many were lying stretched out asleep.

"Tai, are they waiting for a later train to take them to a Mela [religious festival]?"

Tai did not answer my question but said, "Come, Akka."

Into the station we went. Inside the floor was covered, every inch of it, with Indians. Group after group was lying down, as many as could get under a blanket, their faces covered. The ones that could not find space to lie down were crouched around the walls or leaning up against the brick piers that supported the large roof.

"Tai, we have never seen anything like this before," I said, as we picked and pushed our way across the room following our porters.

Outside there were a few rickshaws and two tongas. It was obvious that our luggage would take both tongas. Tai did not want us to ride in a tonga alone after dark, but she didn't want to trust part of our luggage alone in a tonga for the two-mile drive out to the canning company. It was dark now but the moon was up. "Tai," I said, "I'm not afraid. Let me go in the first tonga; you can make your tonga wallah keep just behind me." Tai never admitted fear, but she was cautious. Murder is rare in India, but dacoitism (robbery) is common, especially after dark on lonely roads.

As the porters packed our luggage in, the ponies stood heads down, dispirited. Their ribs were showing but they had red brushes on their heads, like circus ponies, and a circle of bells on their necks. The better of the tongas, the one that Tai helped me into, had an old French auto horn and I soon knew that my driver squeezed it at every opportunity. Off we set, the tonga wallahs snapping their whips, the bells jingling, our two-wheeled carts swaying with the weight, and my driver squeezing his French horn. Straight ahead on the road we went, the moon shining down through the roadside trees. Our gay mood was still with us.

At the corner of the cantonment, the housing for the

military, the road turned out into the country. Tai's tonga was just behind me; the ponies were trotting peacefully along, but there were many people walking along the roadside, going both ways. At eight at night roads are usually deserted. Suddenly a jeep came dashing from behind and stopped abruptly beside my tonga. An American man leaned out towards me.

"Are you Miss Wilcox?"

"No," I said.

"The coolies at the station told us an American and another woman had set out for Brindahan in tongas. The road is so under water it is dangerous to go through."

Tai in her tonga pulled up on the other side of me just as I said, "We are going to Mathura Products Company."

"Turn back!" the man said, shouting over the roar of the motor of his jeep. "The canning factory is surrounded by water, flooded. You must turn back." Tai had gotten out of her tonga like a flash and was around beside the man.

"My son and his family live in the compound at the canning factory. I must find them." She looked up at the man with a steady gaze, but she did not ask him to help us. It was as if the man did not see or hear her. He backed his jeep as suddenly as he had come, scattering groups of Indians walking along, turned his vehicle, and was off in a flash. Tai stood, then she said, "Not even for you, an American, would he offer help. He is from the missionaries at Brindahan."

Tai got back into her tonga. Her actions were swift now. "I will go ahead," she called.

I don't think she leaned forward and used the whip on the pony herself, but her tonga was rattling ahead at a good rate of speed. My man used the whip on his pony to keep up. I could see water on both sides of the road, water black and treacherous as the moon lighted it. Tai's tonga came to a sudden halt. As I came up I could see ahead of us a vast sheet of dirty water. It was lapping higher with the ugly sound of a river out of control.

We got out and stood there clinging to one another. Our thoughts were with Madhu, Madhurani, and the five little children. *They were out in that swirling, ed-dying flood.* Tai said, "Akka, Akka." Then she began to question bystanders. This had happened suddenly, they told her. *The Jumna was flooding.* There had been a sudden rise in the water and a further rise was predicted. Hundreds of houses on the river bank were in danger. Just a little while ago the wall of the canning company had broken; the factory was flooded. Tai kept saying, "But my children. Did they get the families out?" The bystanders jerked their heads to the side with sympathy. There was a splashing in the water and out of the darkness on a bicycle came a man with turban and whiskers. Madhu had sent him to look for us.

"Your son and family are safe. They are just about to evacuate them. They have a raft."

The man from the factory told us that we were about half a mile from the factory. The water in front of us was only a couple of feet deep. Then there was another crest of high ground. Beyond that was the Jumna itself. The raft would have only a short distance to go over the really deep swift water. Tai said, "We will send one tonga through this water to the higher ground to bring them here." Tai gave orders to the tonga wallahs. Neither was willing to brave the water.

I kept saying in a low voice, "Offer more, Tai." At last the stouter man, with the stouter pony, said he would go. Feverishly Tai pushed them as they piled the luggage into the other tonga. The pony stopped short as he felt the water on his legs. *The man whipped him.* Soon he was splashing through. We couldn't see ahead in the blackness to the high ground. Tai clung to me, her body stiff. My mind kept seeing in the darkness the little makeshift raft swept in the torrent with Madhu, Madhurani, and the five little children huddled on it.

Time passed, each minute longer. We heard again the splashing of water. The tonga appeared. In it was the family, all of them. Out got Madhu, Surat in one arm, Satish in the other, Madhurani was holding

Prabhavati high on her shoulder. The two older boys were close to them. The children's eyes were wide but there was no fright. Tai was embracing the children. Madhu began to tell us about the situation. Madhurani, with the sweet calm look that was so warm it felt like a smile, said, "Mother, Aunti, did you have a pleasant time in Kashmir?"

The Jumna had been flooding for several days. The authorities had predicted a further rise of three feet. The manager had felt the wall of the factory compound would hold, but nevertheless had had them take precautions. All machinery had been moved; they had been working hard getting the cases of tinned goods up when there was a quick rise in the Jumna. Suddenly the factory wall was breached. Fortunately, Madhurani had had a coolie get all their belongings high up so they were safe. More rise of water was predicted, but they thought the factory would stand. Already there was three feet of water in their quarters and it was just as high in the luxurious guest quarters where Tai and I had lived. Madhurani, with Prabhavati, Prakash, and Kiran had come out on the raft first, two men poling it across the water; then Madhu had come with Surat and Satish. The raft was too small for them all to come at once.

We stood there warm with the glow of safety. There was more splashing and a row of coolies appeared, walking single file through the water, in the very center of what had been the road. On their heads they had bed-rolls and big bundles. Then a man came out from the factory just beside us, its dim lights showing back of the roadside, the light of the moon falling on his smiling face as he walked towards us. He and Madhu knew one another only as managers, in neighboring factories. Madhu was production manager at the Mathura, but this man, named Goyal, was both manager and owner of the factory, Kashi Taps and Cocks. He told us that this was a new factory, just being opened, that their office building was empty except for a couple of big tables. We could sleep there that night.

Madhu accepted at once and our little procession made its way around into the factory grounds. Tai hung onto me as we felt our way over the uneven earth in the darkness. We went through a small door into a space twelve by twenty, with a brick floor, newly laid but uneven and already littered. There were no windows but at the street end big double doors could be thrown open for air and light. A single board held them shut; a single bulb dangled down, making a dim light. "Akka, Akka, what have I got you into?" Tai murmured. Prakash and Kiran, the two older boys, had attached themselves to us. The other three were close to their mother. All of them were quiet, like baby quail whose mother has told them to be silent, motionless, in danger.

In that instant, the coolies came in with the bedrolls. Madhu directed the tables to be pushed together in one corner; Goyal came in, followed by two of his servants carrying two charpoys (rope beds). Our tonga wallah came in with our bedrolls and luggage. Tai said, "Akka, poor as it is, you have a place to lay your tired body." Fatigue was creeping over me and Tai looked worn. The vision was still sharp in my mind of her standing close by the black deadly waters praying, yearning for the safety of her children, but now we had shelter.

Before opening the bedrolls, Madhurani directed the floor to be swept. From somewhere they got one of the little bundles of reeds they used for brooms and one of the servants to dust the floor. Tai coughed and said, "Come, Akka, we will step outside and pay off our tonga wallah."

The men were waiting. When I said, "Be generous, Tai," Tai gave me an indignant look and said, "I know the time for that." The men were demanding in loud voices. Tai gave the one what he asked; the other, the one who had gone through the water, she gave much more. They left quarreling with one another.

Back in the office, we found pushed against the large doors, the two charpoys, our bedrolls open on them. Madhurani was already squatting on the tables, her bed-

rolls spread, the three younger children lying down. Goyal was just leaving, the warm smile still on his face. "We have pushed your beds against the outside door to make it more difficult for someone to break in, but you will be safe. My servants will guard the grounds all night; they will not sleep. Tai had me lie down; there was no taking off of clothes. Prakash and Surat were still standing by.

Tai said, "There is room for Prakash with me but, Surat, you will have to go with your father." Madhu lifted him up on the tables, shut and bolted the small door, turned out the light. He got up so easily on the tables I did not hear him. There was no sound from the family.

I opened and shut my eyes several times to get them used to the darkness. Tai's bed was tight against mine; she was next to me. Prakash was by the door. I knew that she was sitting wrapped in her devotions, but I could not see her and I jumped when she touched me, patting my face, and leaning close to whisper in my ear, "Krishna came again for me, Akla."

2

It was morning when I woke. Tai and Prakash had gotten out of their bed without waking me. Madhu was gone, the small door was open, and Madhurani was sitting with the children on the tables. I sat up with a start. Tai and the boys came and sat on the edge of my bed and all of us began to laugh. Our faces, our hands, our clothes were dirty, we were hungry, we had nothing to eat, no place to go; we were refugees from the flood.

Then Madhu came and said, "Come, Mother, come Aunti, I have water outside I will pour for you." The water was cold as it trickled over our hands, and we splashed it over our faces. We had just finished when Kashi Goyal rode in, in a rickshaw. He was still our

smiling Krishna. He had containers of various sizes on the seat beside him. The hot food was carried into the office for the family, but Tai and I were loaded into the rickshaw; we were to have baths and breakfast at his home. A servant brought a bicycle and Kashi pedaled just ahead of us. We looked back at the water; it was still lapping insistently up at the barrier but it did not seem ugly as it had in the darkness. People were passing up and down the road; some were wandering along, a few were on bicycles. It seemed a long way until we came to the turn into town, the land barren and biblical, bits of old temples and ruins evident in the barren hills on both sides.

Now we were riding on city streets, walls about the compounds; there were no modern buildings here. I thought about Mathura. It had displeased Tai when I read the signpost *Muttra*.

"That was a disgrace the British put on the city; that word has horrid connotations. Mathura is one of the seven holy cities in India, the second most holy because it was the birthplace of Lord Krishna." Mathura is one of the oldest in India. The population is about eighty thousand. There is no hotel nor food for a Westerner. The constant throngs of pilgrims used the large houses (hostels) built by their various sects and castes along the river Jumna.

We entered the main bazaar, jolting along now on the ancient stone slabs that paved it. In the early morning the stalls were not open. This ancient bazaar bought and sold just as people did thousands of years ago; it was the principal, the only business place in the city. The buildings two and three stories high, kept the narrow streets in shade. We were winding, turning, Kashi ahead of us; at one turn he stopped, got off. Our rickshaw pulled up. Between the buildings we could see a still narrower way, going up sharply with steps at intervals. Kashi started walking up, we following. At each level we could see the entrance to a dwelling. "My family has lived here for hundreds of years," he said. At the third floor he led us into a small hallway; a door

opened into a courtyard, its floor heavy wire, supported by wooden beams. Above it was another wire floor, that one open to the sky. I had just a glimpse of a couple of old women squatting where the early sunlight fell on them.

Kashi led us up a narrow half flight of stairs entering directly into a narrow room. "My brother's bedroom," he said, seating us on a couple of cane-backed armchairs against one wall. Then he left us, shutting the door behind him. Close to us, against the other wall, was a wooden bed, a green comforter pulled up over its tumble of bedding. A clock ticked on a high shelf, a small radio beside it. A Western suit and some shirts hung from nails on the wall. The single latticed window at the end of the room filtered in some light.

I whispered to Tai, "What caste are these people?"

"Third caste," she whispered back. "Vaisyas, the merchant caste."

"Are we welcome?"

"We are the eldest son's guests," she answered, "but it will take a little time for them to make arrangements."

I was indeed hungry and tired when at last Kashi came back, followed by a young girl, a thin child about eight. Her dark face had shiny black tight braids on each side; her frock was cotton, skimpy. Kashi said, "She will direct you to your bath." Down the narrow steps we went and out, just skirting the edge of the courtyard. The old women, their palus over their heads, were holding them over their faces with their thin brown hands, but I could feel their dark eyes peering sharply out at me from the folds. Into another narrow stairway we went, and at the top into a narrow hall that led into a bathroom: a long row of stalls, each closed with wooden slotted doors. There was a tap, water dripping down into the drain in the floor, and a tin cup.

The first door Tai opened had a marble slab, a bucket of water steaming hot and a lota beside it. The next was the same. "But, Tai," I said, "I am desperate." At the other end we found latrines, Japanese style. I got the Swedish toilet paper out of my bag and crouched,

thankful for even this awkward relief. That done, I tried to avoid the bath, but Tai would have none of that, so somehow I got my clothes off in the narrow quarters and found the hot water Tai splashed over me refreshing.

The thin little girl was waiting outside and led us back to the bedroom. Again we sat waiting, but not so long this time, before Kashi came up the steps and pulled out from somewhere in the jumble of the brother's room a couple of small rickety tables. Then he began to reach down the stairs. His hands would come back first with stainless steel thals, some food on them, then containers with chapattis, vegetables, tea—a full meal. We could not see who brought the food for Kashi to hand to us, and he disappeared while we ate, but he seemed to know when we were through. At his appearance, Tai said that we must go back to our family.

As we went down the steps to the bazaar, there were servant women climbing up and down, Kashi helped us into the rickshaw. Now shops were open and Indian men, a few in Western clothes, but most of them in shirts, pajama pants, or dhotis, were walking idly along the narrow way.

Small girls, wearing frocks, in little groups, were gossiping with one another just like women, and boys in shorts and shirts were running along, the boisterous ones shouting, paying no attention to the girls. A few of them carried slates in cloth schoolbags, but most of them were brandishing boards, the size of slates, cut in one piece with handles, on which there was writing in chalk—homework. We passed one tonga, the horse high stepping and well groomed, the two-wheeled cart shining with varnish and with leather upholstery. "Some wealthy man's tonga," Tai said answering my questioning glance. The maze of small shops did not seem like individual units as we pedaled by at a good pace as whole groups were selling the same product. My attention was caught by doorways with archaic carving in stone, voluptuous females, sometimes guarded by companion figures, male slaves. Steps led up to dwellings,

some with balconies overhanging the street, some straight walls with open windows.

"Tai look—look up," I shouted, above the noise and confusion of the street. Tai looked up just in time to see a big monkey clambering down from the rooftop, make a big swing in through an open window. We could hear above the street din, the sounds of breakage and the high screams and cries of women.

Tai laughed with me, but she said, "You can see for yourself why I don't like monkeys; they steal not only fruit but break into houses like that and do great damage."

I didn't mention the many dogs, some lying stretched out along the edge of the narrow street, some limping along, and I saw one get a licking as it came close to a food stall. Cows were everywhere, some lying asleep, some standing idly about. One cow was directly across the road. Our driver called out, but when it did not move, he wheeled himself close and gave it a slap, really a loving pat on its rear. It switched its tail and moved along. Tai said, "Oh, how I missed Indian cows while I was in the United States. You can see, Akka, the lovely expression on their faces and how gracefully they move."

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When we reached the tap and cock factory the two wide doors of the office were open. Prakash and Kiran standing there were watching for us. They came running as we wheeled around and got out at the other side of the building. It was hot and sunny, but inside it was cool and dark. Madhurani roused as we came in. She was sitting cross legged on the tables, Satish, Surat, and Prabhavati asleep there. She was down at once, urging me to lie and rest a while. Tai urged too, so I did lie down on my charpoy, Tai sitting down on the edge of hers, an arm around Prakash and Kiran, one on each side of her. Their hands and faces were clean and

their suits spotless. Madhurani climbed back on the high tables with her babies. Tai was murmuring on and on to the boys. I fell asleep.

It was three when I wakened. Madhurani was saying, "Aunti, will you have tea?" I sat up on the edge of the bed. I felt tousled. Kashi's servant had brought tea. The older children each had a cup, but Prabhavati was on her mother's lap, half hidden by the palu. She was more than a year old, but she was nursing.

I broke the cozy silence. "Have you found a house for us?" I dared speak because Tai and I had come to a little understanding on our first trip to Mathura when plans were being made for Divali. Madhurani was to look for a house for us to live in for a month; the payment for it was to be one of my parts of the Divali celebration.

Madhurani said, "Perhaps tomorrow, Aunti." I looked at Tai.

She said, "Madhu is extremely busy at the factory. They are moving cases of tins up out of the water. If this was Nagpur, I would know where to turn; here we will just have to see."

"Are there no agents for houses?" I asked.

"No," Tai said, "Just private individuals."

The American push welled up in me, but I could neither say nor do anything more. I was thankful that Kashi appeared in the door just then and asked if we would like to see the factory. This at any rate was action, not just sitting, waiting. Tai, the boys, and I went with him. We found that the new factory, whose office we were in, had a small old building as a warehouse, and across from us a new main building for the machinery that was soon to manufacture taps, cocks, and valves of brass and copper.

The factory he wanted to show us, owned by his father, was the old establishment in back, a saltpeter factory. Kashi Goyal was much like Madhu, a tall, well-formed Indian, highly intelligent. He explained the factory so that even I had a quite complete picture of it. There were high piles of trenched dirt. Water was run

through this soil, arrangement being made for the water to trickle down into huge vats where it was evaporated in the sun, also by boiling. Then it was crystallized by standing in tanks. "A most primitive method," he said, "but we produce several tons per day. The Indian government protects the price. It costs twice as much to produce as saltpeter imported from Chile, South America."

Without thinking, I said, "Saltpeter is used in the manufacture of explosives."

He laughed and parried my remark with "The ancient use of saltpeter was for fireworks. We use lots of fireworks at Divali. We do not know just how old this factory is. My family has owned it for the last seventy years."

Then he asked if my son could find out if there is any saltpeter manufactured in the United States. If he could get the address of the factory, he would like to write to them. And he was anxious for any literature or trade journals about taps and cocks. He spoke with vigor. "In a couple of years, I plan to visit the United States."

We were back when Madhu came. He was clean but looked thin and strained. He was smiling with the news that he had a place for us. The bookkeeper at the Mathura factory, a refugee from Pakistan, had a block empty in the house that the government had put up for him. It would do for the moment. Tongas would have to be called to move us. The station wagon would not start. In the confusion of the wall going down last night, it had not been moved to high enough ground and the engine had got wet. We had not gone to look at the river, but Madhu said while the crest had been reached, the water level had gone down only a few inches. They still had better than three feet of water in the factory.

Kashi Goyal's rickshaw and servant came just then with containers full of hot food for us. The children sat in a row on the tables to eat like birds on a branch. Madhurani was holding Prabhavati in one arm as she served. Madhu, Tai, and I were sitting on a charpoy.

Prabhavati fussed until Madhurani settled down and let her nuzzle under her sari. Madhurani was not eating, but I could see that there was plenty in the containers, and I knew that she would eat when we were done, as was proper for an Indian matron.

We ate leisurely. It was dusk by the time we were done. The rickshaw was outside. Once Madhurani had eaten, she and Madhu rolled and strapped their holdalls, Tai doing ours, not letting me help. Madhu, Madhurani, and the three youngest set off in the rickshaw for the new block where we were to move. Madhu would come back with tongas for us, our holdalls, and all the Kashmir luggage. Prakash and Kiran sat close to their grandmother, one on each side. The dim electric light was on; it was dark.

Madhu had closed the big doors when we had started to eat, so we sat shut in, waiting. Tai was laughing, talking with the boys, telling them about our voyage on the freighter. At last Madhu was back; he had the same tonga wallahs who had brought us out the night before but he had let the rickshaw go and it took a great deal of packing to get all our belongings in.

Tai and I were in one tonga following Madhu. He had both boys on his lap, Madhurani and the girls in the seat behind him. The moon was not up so the road was dark and shadowy. A few white-clad Indian men were slipping along, but there was no excitement to-night.

When we came to the branches of the road, we turned in the direction we had gone to visit Krishna's birthplace. I could see the land dimly with its bare hummocks, the small ruined temples. Out a way the new settlement began, row upon row of white stucco blocks, high walls closing them off from the narrow streets going off at right angles from the main road. Three Krishna Naga was our new address. We turned up the fourth street. There was a bad smell in the air. Tai was moaning, "Oh, Akka, it is stinky here. This is impossible for you." I couldn't see in the dark, but I knew there must be an open sewer ditch by the road. Up

godowan, over and over. I opened my eyes. With the shutters closed, the room was still dark but I could see Tai sitting upright, making her morning devotions. The singing faded away, "godowan, godowan." I lay motionless, not speaking, but Tai was aware that I was awake, because she came over onto my bed as soon as she finished her prayers. I could feel her happiness as she perched at my feet, pulling my covers up around her like a nest. Her children were safe, and she was safe with them.

The singing was loud and clear now, with measured chant, the time beat off by the clap of sandals on the street.

"Why are they singing so early in the morning, Tai?" I whispered. It seemed too early to speak out loud but the singers were in full voice.

"Akka, this is a special devotion at Divali time. 'Going around' is a very holy thing in Mathura, a holy city, Pilgrims coming here go around the circumference of Mathura; people living here go around at least once a year, some very religious souls will go around every month. It is sacred too, to set up an area of any size, this one is about four square blocks; during the month of Divali, a band of religious people will rise each morning, start at five and go around these blocks singing. It is a symbol of great devotion."

"Are they saying, going around, going around?"

"Oh, Akka, what foolish notions you get about India. The song is about Govardhana, the mountain that is sacred to Krishna

The doors opened and Madhurani glided in carrying Prabhavati in one arm, a tray in her other hand. "Aunti, you need tea after your hard experience." The night before, Madhurani with her babies had come out on a raft from the flooding Jumna, she had slept on a table; we had reached this block after dark, but she had come at six in the morning to me with "bed tea." Now Madhurani sat on the edge of Tai's bed talking in a low voice, with the soothing words one uses in India, to an elder person as I drank the hot, good tea. Prabhavati

had had her face hidden under her mother's palu; now she peeped out, then turned her face against her mother's bosom with a sharp cry.

"My white face and white hair are too much for her," I said laughing. Madhurani got up, with Prabhavati turned away from me.

"Aunti, I must go."

At once I dressed. I was putting on a sweater when Tai came in. "Akka," she said, "you have had no bath. As you know the bathroom here is adequate in old Indian style but there will be no hot water until they bring Madhurani's big copper heater."

"I can live today without a bath," I replied.

Tai did not pour water on me, Hindu fashion, that day but let me remain in my Christian dirt. I wondered at this moment if Tai would relate the filthy bathing habits in the United States. She tolerated showers, or a rubber tube with spray, but felt the best was water poured on from a lota. She was really shocked that I favored sitting in a hot tub bath. I appeased her a little by telling her that I stood in the tub afterwards and splashed clear water on my body. I had time for thoughts that morning; I could hear the children playing on the roof; the Punjabi children in the other family had gone to school. Madhu was making trips back and forth with a tonga, bringing trunks and household gear in from their block at the Mathura Canning Factory. The "old woman" who was their servant had appeared and was carrying Prabhavati about in her arms; Tai and Madhurani were setting things in order. I made my bed and Tai's, but when I asked for a dustcloth and a broom, I met with sharp reproof. I had forgotten their ways; as an elder it was not suitable for me to work, above all it was not suitable for any lady to sweep.

I gave a quick Indian jerk of my head to the side at Tai's words, but, inside, my American housewife's instincts were roused; to clean and to help were cardinal virtues with me. I went out on the front verandah; it was littered and dusty. The front courtyard had a row of cannas on one side, many of the leaves were withered;

they had not been watered or cared for. The marigolds on the other side of the walk were in the same state, but there were a few blooms, and a good many buds. Before the wall there were half a dozen red and yellow cocks-combs. The little courtyard itself was dry clay, with humps and hollows, littered like the verandah floor.

I walked up and down the few feet of walk. I could see above the wall a few young trees in neighboring courtyards, and across the four barbed wire strands of the side wall in the adjoining courtyard a rose had been trained, luxuriantly covering it. I felt so shut in that I opened the metal gate. I sat down on the edge of the verandah, a low step up from the courtyard. Almost at once, to my delight, a train of burros trotted by, ten of them in single file, carrying enormous saddlebags of rope mesh piled high with dried dung cakes. The burros were a light gray, almost white, and some of them had their forelocks, manes and tails dyed sky blue, others were dyed a light cerise. Some of them had pink, some blue dots all over their bodies, and one burro—he must have been a favorite—had his legs dyed cerise. Behind them followed an Indian, bare except for a faded cerise dhoti; it was just a scrap of cloth. He was calling out to let the householders know that they could buy their dung cakes, for braziers, for the day.

Tai came out just then and answered my question. The burros had been decorated for the "Work Animals Festival." All the bullocks had had their horns painted. Then she scolded about the gate. It must never be left open. It was not proper, she said, and it was not safe.

The children were looking over the balcony when I went out to the back courtyard and joined Tai; they were calling, "Aji, Aji, come." (Aji means grand mother.) So up the steep steps we went to see the roof terrace. We found it in two parts, one covering the service rooms that faced the brick courtyard and the back balcony. Then another steep little flight up to a high rectangular balcony over the main part of the house. Surat and Satish were running and shouting. Prakash and Kiran who were our guides joined them. We stood a

few minutes enjoying the children's play in the warm sunshine; the sky was cloudless blue overhead.

Then Tai and I went down, Tai saying that we would eat. Madhurani had made the main meal early; tomorrow I would have a proper breakfast. Madhu had gone to work. Very shortly we would go to the bazaar. Madhurani would have to begin getting her supplies for Diwali. Everything must be ready before Mukund and his family came, for then the celebration would be on us. My meal was easy for Madhurani; I had brought down a big sack of tinned goods from Delhi. She had opened a can of Heinz tomato soup (British-canned) and a tin of Danish ham. She had cooked a mixed green vegetable for her family. It was hot with pepper but Tai allowed me one tablespoon. I liked it very much, but Tai said, "Akka, your stomach can stand only a small amount of our spices and peppers." Madhurani had boiled sweet potatoes, English style, there were chapattis, thin flat cakes of unleavened bread, and she gave me a banana for dessert. Tai would not let me try to sit on the floor for my meals. She had put a steamer trunk with a blanket on it just at the entrance to the kitchen and borrowed from the other family a low table, large enough to hold my *thal* and tumbler. It was neatly spread with a square blue handwoven cloth. I used a Kleenex for a napkin. The family sat in a row on a narrow mat on the brick kitchen floor. Just an arm's length from me, there was Tai, next to her Prakash, Kiran, Satish, then Surat. Madhurani sat over against the wall, Prabhavati lying in her arms, her head under the palm. She had a spoon with a long handle, so she could reach the family *thals*, and serve more food as was needed. Flies were bothering us. When he was there Madhu sprayed but it did not seem to do much good.

Once we were through, Prabhavati was asleep. Her mother laid her on the charpoy in the main room. Surat climbed up beside her; the other three ran to play on the roof, and the old woman settled down at the edge of the back verandah eating all that was left of the Indian food. I had eaten the can of soup, the rest of the

ham was put away for my evening meal. I heard the corrugated iron front gate creak and slam. The doors were open in the main room and we could see a thin, poor looking Indian standing on the front balcony. Madhurani said, "Ready, Aunti? Madhu has arranged for rickshaws to take us to the bazaar." Outside, Tai walked lightly along sputtering about the stink of the open sewer, "Oh, Akka, how can you stand this?"

"Tai, just yesterday there were open sewers in many cities in the United States."

Tai flounced along, her sari seeming to touch the road, she did not hold it up, but the hem was not soiled. I thought of my mother fifty years ago in a long, full taffeta skirt, going lightly across roads, muddy and dirty with droppings from horses, the only means of transportation, and cows that were driven through the town streets morning and evening to pasture. My mother did hold the train, at the back of her skirt, daintily in her hand at one side, but the front and side of the skirt was never raised and the hems were never soiled.

Tai's voice roused me from my musing. "Get in, Akka." The bicycle rickshaw was old and worn but clean. Tai and I had to push to fit in the seat. Madhurani was ahead of us in another rickshaw. We passed many bullock carts, the bullocks' horns painted green, blue, pink, and one pair gilded. The water buffaloes slunk along, their slender, ugly faces peering this way and that, no decoration on their twisted dark gray horns. We met a burro train decorated too, on the way out of town, the net sacks empty of dung cakes. Ahead of us in the road there were some droppings; a little girl, in a filthy sari, dashed out and gathered the dung up onto a rush tray. As she walked back she was patting it with delight.

The road turned now, there was a row of camel carts drawn up at one side. The road was crowded with Indians walking, on bicycles, with rickshaws, tongas, bullock carts, buffalo carts, and cows ambling along, the queens of the traffic, given precedence. Our rickshaw crowded to the side before a row of little open shops,

shelves full of burlap bags and tin containers; in front were crouched merchants, their wares up a few feet on big wicker trays. The men wore turbans and on the huge trays jaggery was piled high in big lumps, buzzing black with flies. Indian women in grimy saris were standing back of trays of vegetables, long poles in their hands with which they pushed aside the noses of the cows trying to snatch the green things. One animal, bolder and cleverer, got a mouthful of spinach; the woman, in exasperation, rapped the cow sharply across the nose. Heads on every side snapped to one side in disapproval, and men near by shouldered the cow back from such disrespect.

Tai and Madhurani got out, leaving me sitting in the rickshaw, Tai saying, "There is nothing to see, Madhurani is buying her supplies for Divali." I sat silent, quiet in the rickshaw, the crowd pushing around me. No one paid the least attention to my white face or my Western suit. I could see Tai and Madhurani through the heads of the crowd. The merchant was holding up a big balance scale, then a small one as Madhurani gave the quick jerk of her head to the side in assent when the amount she wanted was on the pan. I could see that she was buying rice, wheat, dahl on the big scale, and jaggery too. I was thankful to see it taken out of a big tin free from flies. On the small scale there were small amounts of mustard seed, sesame seed, dried red peppers, pepper, salt, cardamom, cinnamon, and some seasonings I could not recognize. The rickshaw drivers came to the rickshaw carrying the cloth bags Madhurani had brought with her. She bought vegetables from the trays, her rickshaw driver carried these in his hands, her sacks had been used up with the dry supplies.

Once Tai and Madhurani were back in the rickshaws, our drivers pedaled us on. I had thought we were in the main bazaar, but found I was not when we came to the big gate. It was the usual high arch, partly of stone, but most of it brick, plastered and painted, the colors faded. Mathura, an ancient city, had an old,

old entrance to the three miles of narrow twisting road that made up its bazaar. Crowds were pushing under the high arch but as we drew near they parted, and a small procession came through. It was headed by men playing instruments, two with Indian drums, two with bagpipes and three with flutes. Following the quarter tone wail, squeak, and thump of the music was a palanquin borne on the shoulders of four Indians in spotless white tunics and long dhotis. The deep purple, silken curtains of the palanquin were drawn. Crowding around were many men, all in long dhotis but many of them wearing Western jackets. Behind them there were three tongas, the heads of the ponies with red brushes, bells around their necks jingling. The tongas were packed full of women, the palms of their rich dark brocade saris over their heads; and there were a couple of thin old men squeezed in among them.

The palanquin was small, I asked, "Tai, is it a wedding procession? Are they taking a bride to the groom's house?" "No," Tai was in such a good humor that she gave details in answer to my many questions. "These are Maharashtrians from Bombay. [Any Indian woman can tell you exactly where any person she sees is from, her state, and her caste. They tell by the way the sari is worn, by the jewelry, by the facial and body characteristics. They judge the men too by appearance and dress. They can read one another like books.] These people are celebrating 'going around' Mathura by taking an idol of Lakshmi out in procession. In Bombay, Divali is consecrated to Lakshmi. She is sometimes called 'Our Lady of Bombay.' Lakshmi is the goddess of prosperity. The end of our fiscal year occurs during Divali so it is an auspicious time to worship her. Look, Akka, did you see her yellow robe; the curtains blew just as she passed us. The purple of the curtains too is a color associated with Lakshmi. She will have four arms, like her consort Vishnu. In one of her right hands she will hold a rosary and the cord [pasa] in one of her left hands. This is emblematical of the sea which girdles the earth. Lakshmi is the mother of Kama Deva,

the god of love [the cupid of India]. As Mombadevi she gives her name to *Bombay*."

But I still had questions. "Are they taking Lakshmi around Mathura?" Now Tai was impatient with me; the noise and confusion of the main bazaar pressed in on us, but with her lips close to my ear she explained again.

"These Maharashtrians from Bombay have made a pilgrimage to Mathura. They themselves have 'gone around' Mathura, then they have purified themselves, dressed in their best, worshipped at the temple, now they are taking Lakshmi as an idol out in procession through the bazaar to celebrate the event."

Madhurani had her rickshaw stopped ahead of us and was getting out. "Come, Aunti," she said, "We are going in the cloth bazaar."

Tai and I followed her. It looked like four small open shops, with quite a wide opening between, but when we entered at the left we found a big loop stretching back packed with shops on both sides. The loop was a high-roofed arcade; saris were displayed in every color, every pattern. They lined the walls of each little stall; where there were shelves, they were piled high. Saris were hung across poles; they were arranged in fans; the floor of each little establishment was heaped with them, women crowding round asking to be shown the special saris. There were many men in the throng, brothers buying for brother-sister day. I walked along in a daze, wanting every sari displayed, but Tai and Madhurani pushed along through the crowd. Well to the back was a double stall with a low step. The floor was covered with white muslin to sit on while the merchant showed the cloth. There were more yard goods than saris in this stall.

Tai, Madhurani, and I squatted in a tight little group. I discovered at once that material was being bought for dresses for the little girls. Tai was always quick to choose; she indicated a heavy material, printed in gold, and a delicate tracery of color; the material had enough body that slips would not show through.

"Tai," I whispered, "that's rayon."

"That's all right, Akka, this is suitable for the quick wearing out a child gives its clothes."

She had indicated to the merchant dark green and dark plum bolts of material. It was a narrow width, plain woven, but with a three-inch border of intricate brocade on each side. I knew at once that this would be blouse material for Madhurani and Mandakini. I let my hand slip down at my side and gave Tai a light nudge, to indicate that I wanted to cooperate in the purchase. Tai ordered a yard of each piece, and five yards of the white and gold material, I protesting that there should be more yardage. Tai replied, "Indians do not need so much material."

Out in the street again, our rickshaw wallah was standing waiting; he told Tai that they couldn't park in front of a shop, but that his brother had the rickshaws near, in a side street. Tai had already found out that the men were brothers, and that they had a rickshaw stand near our block, so that we could always get them easily. As we stood waiting, the crowds surged around us, all in holiday mood, none seeming to notice me but I felt Western, alien. I was certain that I was the only American in Mathura. I wanted to take hold of Tai's hand, but knew that she would say, "Don't be childish, Akka," reading, as she said, my mentality, knowing that I was timid in the crowd. But I did push close to her as if I was jostled there.

Our next stop was at a stall where mats and matting were sold. The mat the children had sat on for their meal was worn; I thought a new one would be bought for Divali, but instead Madhurani selected a woven piece like a dustpan, but without a handle. It was delicate weaving of natural fine reeds with a design in black. I was charmed with it.

"What is it for, Tai?" I asked.

"We use them to clean grain. Remember, Akka, I have told you that our supplies come to us just as they were harvested. Before Divali, every grain of wheat, every grain of rice, everything that Madhurani has bought must be cleaned and stored, ready for use."

Madhurani bought the pan and two flat woven trays. I was looking at the mats; they had woven designs in deep reddish pink. I had selected a narrow one about six feet long and two wider ones that I thought would do well in the main room when Tai and Madhurani both objected to my purchase, Madhurani saying that she had mats. I insisted on taking the narrow one, saying that we must have one new mat for Divali.

As we rode along the street again, with things to buy on every side, I thought of the scanty furnishings of Madhu's and Madhurani's house. Part of this was Oriental habit; tropical heat does not want the warm furnishings of snow and ice. They had trunks stuffed with clothes, their bedrolls full of bedding; they had a trunk of silver, and Madhurani had the tea set Tai had brought her. But we did stop for additional household gear at a metal shop. Madhurani selected two stainless steel thals and several small bowls. I was charmed with the brass trays, lotas, pots, pans of every size and kind. I had noticed that Madhurani had only a few brass containers, and remembering the handsome rows of them I had seen in the kitchens in Nagpur, I wanted to buy a nest of them for her. Again I met with rebuff, not so insistent this time, but Tai did say, "Madhurani needs big containers, she has a number of small ones." So I selected one of the largest ones and one just a size smaller. Madhurani, by her tradition, did not say thank you, but I could tell that this time I had pleased her.

On we rode, the bazaar seemed endless, but at last we came back to the big gate. Outside we did not turn down the street we had come on, but kept going ahead. I saw Madhurani lean forward and speak to her driver. We pulled up beside heaps of clay pots and jars, on the ground, by the roadside. Madhurani did not get out, but the rickshaw driver began putting many little clay saucers in around the bundles—there were several dozen of them.

Tai was explaining to me, "Those are the little clay saucers we use for Divali; a little oil and a wick is put in them; we decorate outside our houses with lights on

the principal night. Divali means 'row of lights' as well as 'feast of lanterns.' "

Our rickshaws were going up the street as Tai went on explaining that Divali was held in Kartika (October-November). The principal day was the day after the darkest night of the month; it was like our Christmas and New Year in that it was a religious festival, and also the beginning of the new fiscal year. Like our holiday season it lasted a number of days, all wanted their houses clean and decorated, new clothes were in order and it was the time for certain gifts.

We turned down the road we had come. We made slow progress. Across the street from the food stalls I saw charpoys offered for sale. I squealed over a low, little one, the size for a young child; then I saw chairs, woven of reeds with hourglass bottoms coming up into comfortable arms and a high back. "Please, Tai, stop. Asta, asta," I called.

Tai did speak to the driver, and said to me, "You must have a chair for your comfort, Alla."

There had been four straight chairs and a table at Madhu's block in the Mathura Compound, but they had not been brought to our new quarters; there was no provision except to sit on the floor. I insisted on two chairs, saying laughingly, "You know, Tai, Americans always buy things in pairs." One chair was put on top of all the bundles in Madhurani's rickshaw, we held the other one in ours. Now we did go back to our block.

The rest of the day was a happy confusion. I wanted to help shake the trays and the reed dustpan to clean grain, but I was led back to the front verandah and given tea. Madhu arrived home, coming in from the back, pushing the children off him while he made a deep namaste to me. Shortly, the children came each in turn from Prakash through Surat making namastes to me, before we had our evening meal. When that was over, I sat back in my chair on the porch. It was turning dark, that dusky evening time in India when the fragrance of burning dung still clings in the air. I saw a man's head come up above the wall, a light in his

hand; then I noticed that there was a lamp frame on a pole. This was the lamplighter. I walked quickly down the short walk, opened the metal gate; my mind away in the English books of my childhood where there was always a lamplighter. I looked up at the little oil lamp with its steady yellow flame back of the glass and down the street in the dusk at this Indian lamplighter, in one hand a three-rung ladder to reach up the poles, in the other, by a three-rope handle, a basket tray full of little brass lamps. I could smell the roses across the way, I could hear the low evening chirp of a bird in the tree, farther away there was the radio wail of an Indian love ballad. I shut the gate and went back to my easy chair, led into this dream world of the present by the lamplighter.

4

Tai's voice wakened me the next morning. "Akka, here is your tea. I don't like to rouse you when you are so weary, but there is much to do. The dhobi is here; you must get your laundry ready for him." When I started up, Tai said, "Drink your tea, Akka. There is plenty of time." When I checked the clothes the dhobi had brought back for me I looked at my nightie. It was as dazzling white as the promises of American soap ads, but yesterday I had seen washing spread on the ground that had few spears of grass beside a pool slimy green. Tai had seen me looking at it, and said, "The river is still too high for the dhobis to wash in it, but in a few days they can use it again." But my clothes were very clean and had a good smell. Perhaps the chlorophyll in the slime bleached them; at any rate they had dried under a hot sun.

This morning I had my usual eggs for breakfast and was just through when the tailor came. He was a thin, anxious young man, his bushy black hair slicked back

with oil; he was neat in a white shirt, the long tail hanging out over his pajamas, wide at the bottom. Madhu was with him. Tai brought out the big bundle of white handwoven silk she had bought in Kashmir and the two pieces of brocade from Hong Kong, red and black with their designs in gold. She let loose the white silk in long folds on Madhurani's lap, Madhurani sitting cross-legged on the big charpoy. I was seated on one of the cane chairs, Tai sat in the other, Madhu stood. We were in the main room, the doors closed so that we were discretely away from any glances of our neighbor. The neighbor children had had to be pushed back a little as the door out onto the front balcony was shut, and the old woman servant had had the back door shut in her peering face, too. Our children were gathered round the charpoy, their dark eyes wide with excitement; no one made a sound except Prabhavati. She took one look at me, drew her breath in and let out a cry but stopped when her mother pulled her palu over Prabhavati's face.

The tailor began running the white silk through his fingers, measuring the amount. Tai told him that he was to make Nehru shirts and trousers for the three boys, and also for Anil. She indicated his height, he was just between Kiran and Surat in size. Then she ordered shirts made for Madhu and Mukund. The material now was in a heap on the floor. Madhu went over to a trunk, took out a shirt, tossing it on the pile. The tailor questioned, did Madhu want a bush shirt, short sleeves and square tail? Madhu quickly picked up the shirt he had brought and held it up; it had long sleeves and long tails. Meekly the tailor took his tape measure that had been hanging round his neck, and held it up to Madhu's arm. Then he measured each boy from shoulder to ankle. I said in a low voice to Tai, "He isn't writing the measurements down." She replied, "He will remember them, of course. Don't distract me, Akka." Then she entered into a long discussion with the tailor about the making of the brocade into Nehru vests for the boys. They were speaking in Hindi, but I thought I knew the problem.

When Tai had bought the brocade in Hong Kong I had protested that it would never make four vests, but she had said, "You will see, Akka. There is sufficient. If we buy more, the tailor will squeeze to get out another garment that he can sell on the side." Now I didn't ask questions, but Tai explained, "I wanted a red vest for Anil. It would look so well with his complexion, but the tailor insists that he can only get the coats out if he cuts a large and a small garment from each piece. Prakash as the eldest must have red, so it will have to be red for Prakash and Surat, and black for Kiran and Anil."

Once this argument was over, short work was made of planning the frocks for the girls. The tailor measured Satish from shoulder to hem, not letting the measure touch her as it had when he measured the boys. Madhurani spoke to him for a minute telling him, I was certain, that Pramila's dress was to be a size smaller, then Prabhavati's, and Sujata's still smaller. When he lifted the blouse material, Madhurani was shy. Tai spoke to her, she got up, opened a trunk, and brought a blouse that she threw on the heap of material. The white silk now had a glowing peak of color with the red and black of the brocade and the green and purple of the blouse material. Quickly, deftly the tailor folded it. In seconds, he had the materials in a neat small bundle and was off with it unwrapped.

Tai said now that we must go at once to the bazaar. There would be just time before our main meal. Madhu would go with us so that we could find the shop promptly. We turned under the big gate of the main bazaar; crowds were pressing along just as yesterday. We stopped at a shop displaying framed pictures of Krishna, Lakshmi, Vishnu—all the gods. Tai got out of the rickshaw, I asking her what she was buying. "Madhu thought I could buy cardboard here to make the fort. They use a stiff backing when they frame their pictures." She went in the narrow open aisle; I standing just outside, didn't have a chance to ask about "the fort" but I did discover that cards were being sold for Divali greet-

ings, Indian in pictures and script. I promptly selected a big handful, I could still mail them in time for my Christmas season. Then I found small cards with pictures of the gods, garish in color like the big framed prints. I was picking out one of each, when Tai pushed past me carrying a big roll of cardboard.

She saw the bright lithograph of Hanuman on top. "Oh, Akka," she said, "You always go for such things."

Back from the bazaar, we went at once into the large room; the meal was waiting for us. Madhurani had hung two large paper religious panels on each side of the shelves. Prakash took Tai and Kiran took me to look at them, saying, "Come, Aji." They were garish lithographs, one of Krishna as a boy with two gopis, milkmaids; there was a cow, big and white, with painted horns and a red dot on her forehead like a Hindu woman. (Americans think this a mark of high caste, but Tai explained it was a beauty mark, worn by a high caste young woman, if she wished, always worn by a high caste married woman if she is seen outside her family, never worn by a widow.) In the other panel, Krishna was a young man with Radha (his queen). They were posed in dancing steps with anklets of bells. Between the picture panels there were inset shelves. On the center of one of these Madhurani had set a little tray with its mirror back that held the tiny silver Krishna, their household god.

Prakash and Kiran were calling for our attention, saying, "Look, Aji," and pointing at the side wall. There, Madhurani had hung high two cornucopias, a big bunch of pink paper flowers spraying out from them. There was the feeling that the festival was beginning.

As soon as we were through eating, we went to our room; Tai was going to make the fort. The children clustered round her charpoy, where she had spread the cardboard. She got out her water colors and crayons. Prakash had brought a pair of scissors. As Tai marked off with a pencil I could see that the fort was to be four stories high with arched doors, windows, and battlements, each story smaller, making a tower effect. Tai quickly washed over the light tan cardboard with

pinkish red water color, the doors in blue, the arched windows were to be cut out. The water color was pale so Tai set the boys to coloring with red and blue crayons, as she cut out the shapes. The cardboard was heavy; it was hard to cut the battlements and the little windows.

While they worked, I questioned. The fort would be set up in the courtyard and on Divali night it would be illuminated. It was arranged so that clay saucers could be set inside, and still not set the paper structure on fire. When I asked the significance, Tai said, "Oh, Akka, you know that we are Kshatriyas, the second, the warrior caste. We sprang from Vishnu's shoulders so have the strength for fighting and hunting." She reminded me that her caste, while they held the cow sacred and would not eat beef, could eat any other meat, fish, or fowl. Then she said, "My family are Kshatriyas, but we are also Maharashtrians; they too are fighters. We come from a martial race. Akka, I have always made a fort for Divali as a symbol that my family are Kshatriyas and Maharashtrians."

I asked, timidly, if I could clean some in the courtyard. Tai looked up sharply at me. Quickly I added, "If Prakash would bring me a knife, I could trim off the dead flowers, and cut off the dead canna leaves." Tai sent Prakash for a knife but said, "Akka, the old servant will sweep the courtyard."

Tai was inside, where she could not see me, so quickly I pulled the scattered weeds, cutting them off close with the knife when the ground was too baked to get the roots out. Though the rows of flowers were not long I was not finished with them when Tai came out. She had called the old woman, and started her sweeping the hard clay with her short broom. The old woman protested, Tai repeating to me, "She says it is a sweeper's work to clean a courtyard," but went to work, moving around—never rising up from her squat, dust flying, getting the litter together. This was dumped in the corner by the gate for the sweeper to get on his regular morning round.

Tai sent Prakash and Kiran for a bucket of water

from the tap in the back courtyard. Then she herself began to hack at the highest hummocks, but soon she called the old woman, gave her the knife, and stood over her as she worked. She gathered up the clay chunks, put them in the water. She made the old woman cut and scratch until she had the bucket full of mud. I was as eager eyed as the children. Tai sent Prakash for a stick, then she dumped the mud in the center of the courtyard. With the stick she leveled and shaped it, measuring along with thumb and finger extended. Tai squatted too as she worked, but turned back to speak to me. I was sitting on the verandah. I could not work at the flowers without the knife. "Akka, I am making a plinth for the fort. The base really should be four stories high, like the fort, but this year I can make only one; the mud must dry before another story can be added, and I have no time."

Madhurani brought tea for me. When Tai was through with the base for the fort, I took the knife and started working again on the dead leaves and blossoms. As dusk came, Madhu arrived from work. His arms were full. He had a new dhoti for the sweeper, and a new sari for the old woman. These gifts were traditional at Divali. I said to Tai, "Will the sweeper get a dhoti every place he cleans?"

"No, these days only a few can afford to give, but it is necessary that we be generous. You are extra for the sweeper."

The children were squealing with delight. Madhu had brought a good supply of fireworks; they would be shot off one of the Divali nights. Tai took them to store on the shelves in our bedroom; but first she spread them on her bed; the children fondled every piece. Most of them were sparklers, but there were torpedoes, fire crackers, large and small, some of the coiled ones we call snakes, and a few Catherine wheels.

The children's attention was at last distracted by Madhu's hanging of the Tibetan copper globe lantern. The roof of the verandah was plaster and Madhu did not have a hammer, or a nail. The neighbor man had

come out, interested in the arrangements. He too did not have hammer or nails, but sent his boy to bring a piece of wire. Madhu had to use the low table to stand on, there was no ladder, but after struggling he was able to secure the Tibetan copper globe to the metal around the light bulb. All of us stood back when Madhu snapped on the light. We looked up first at the pierced metal work, the light glowing through its tracery, then we admired the lacy shadow on the cement floor. Madhu's voice was husky as he said, "Aunti, you have lighted our home. This globe will be not only light for us but a symbol, other Divalis, that you have been with us."

The next morning Tai brought my bed tea explaining that Madhu and Madhurani, Prakash, and Surat, the two youngest with them, had gone to Mathura station to meet Mukund and Mandakini. It would be eight at least before they were back, but this would be another busy day. They were bringing Tai's trunks, sent on to Nagpur from Bombay customs, after this long interval. Everything must be unpacked, the gifts for all the family were in them. I dressed, had breakfast, Tai saw that the old woman servant sprinkled the floor all through the house with water and swept. Everything was ready when the family came to the back courtyard with a great clatter and confusion. The two tonga wallahs were carrying the trunks and the carryalls into the main room; children were everywhere, Tai's eight grandchildren and the neighbors' children as well—the boy and the twin girls were having *Divali* vacation from school.

Madhurani quieted the family by quickly serving the dinner. It was very early for it, but the family from Nagpur was hungry after their hard night on the train. I could see Mandakini slipping rice into Sujata's mouth; soon the fretful baby was asleep on the charpoy, but sweet, tired Mandakini was now hectored by her other two. They would not sit on the mat with the others but crouched huddled beside her, pulling at her. She coaxed some food into them, and Pramila pulling folds of her mother's sari over herself went to sleep too. Tai coaxed

Anil to her, so at last tired Mandakini ate a little in peace.

The tailor brought the garments he had made. The brocade vests were tried on the boys, but the other garments were accepted without seeing if they fitted. They were counted and admired, and the tailor was given the rupees he asked, and an extra amount for his promptness and for his good work.

Mukund could hardly wait to open the trunks. The metal bands clamped on in the United States had been cut by Bombay customs, but he had to wait until Tai got the keys from her moneybag. Tai insisted that only one trunk be opened at a time. Once the lid was up, Tai, squatting before it, began at once to sputter and complain. Everything had been so carefully, so neatly packed in the United States; now the contents were a jumbled mass. Mukund stood by taking things Tai lifted out, but almost at once there were some books; opening one, he sat down and began to read.

Tai gave a cry of delight and lifted out the parkas she had brought home for the boys.

"Prakash, this is what American boys wear; put it on."

Prakash slipped into the parka, his face was impassive but I could feel his delight. Anil was pushing the other boys, demanding his. Calmly Tai ignored him, putting Kiran's parka on him; Kiran's delight was on his face in a broad grin. He felt the padded lining, then Tai zipped it up, pulled the khaki hood over his head. Anil began to cry, but Tai pulled him to her, putting on his parka; then he ran to his father before she could zip it, burying his face against his father's legs. Surat did not have a parka, Tai had brought him a corduroy outfit. She put it on over his other clothes. His stomach stuck out in the little brown overall, and there was a padded jacket to match, trimmed with a bit of orange. Surat strutted about as all of us laughed. The parkas and the suns fitted, I had had to argue to buy them that large. Tai had kept saying, "Indian children are not

bulky like American children." And I had argued that the grandchildren would have grown tall.

The dresses for the little girls came out next. They were in boxes, another thing I had insisted on, and I felt justified when I saw that they were not crushed. Satish and Pramila had permanently pleated cotton frocks, pale blue and yellow. Madhurani and Mandakini were delighted as Tai explained that the full, full skirts would wash, always keeping their pleats. For the baby girls there were frocks, nylon with touches of embroidery in pale pink; and for all the girls, full little slips of nylon with matching panties.

Last in that trunk for the children were the tubes of Tinker Toys for the boys. Tai called them to her; they squatted about on the floor as Tai showed them how to put the pieces together to make shapes and even small toys. Their faces became absorbed like Mukund's still bent over the book. The neighbor boy had come in and made a little diversion as he tried to take over the toys. But Tai said, "It is time to go," and shepherded him and his twin sisters out, closing the door to the front verandah.

Tai began to fret now, saying that she was missing things. Quickly she opened the other trunk. There she found the gray and the brown topcoats for Madhu and Mukund, and the wool sport coats. Then came the pile of saris. In orlon and silk, for Madhurani there was a deep green-blue, for Mandakini, a deep yellow, and then for both of them nylon in pale green and beige with all-over designs of flowers and leaves. Tai went back to our room for the colorful costume jewelry that she had brought in her own luggage. There were earrings, necklaces, bracelets to match. The daughters-in-law were ecstatic and Tai was triumphant.

Once this moment was over, Tai began to rummage through the trunks. "Akka, Akka," she cried out, "all the saris Dr. Ghate sent are gone!" I shouted too, and squatted by the trunks looking for the saris in the coveted American nylon, one dark brown with orange flowers, one deep green with deep pink blossoms, the

other two gay with big confetti dots of many colors. I had said when Dr. Ghate brought them that they were like a flower garden full of blossoms and butterflies. And I had enjoyed reading in my address book the names where they were to be delivered. Her Highness Maharani Shanka Devi of Baroda, Laxmi Vilas Palace, and Princess Udaysonha Raje Gaekwad, Shivamaharaj, Race Course Road, Baroda, and to Maharani Chimabhaibai Gaekwad, Napean Sea Road, Bombay; Princess Kamaladen Gaekwad, Shangrila, Carmachagale Road, Bombay. These were close relatives of the old Gaekwar of Baroda whom Dr. Ghate had served. Dr. Ghate had said, "Tai knows how to manage with personalities; she will give them intimation of your arrival and carry out the calls properly."

Tai let out another cry, "The baby dolls are gone." The boxes with the large dolls for Satish and Pramila were there but the soft plastic baby dolls for Prabhavati and Sujata, babies themselves, were gone. We looked and looked; they were not there. Pramila was asleep, but Satish was standing by her grandmother. At last Tai opened one of the big white boxes saying, "Sit down, Satish." Satish's dark eyes were big with excitement as Tai slowly lifted out the big doll, holding it up before her. Satish's eyes deepened and widened still more as Tai laid the doll in her arms. Satish's face turned down towards the doll with such wonderment, it was as if she had seen a vision. Tai had told me, "We have no dolls like yours in India," but I was not prepared for the astonishment, the awe that this doll brought to the room. I had not realized the wonderment of seeing the finished beauty of an American doll for the first time. The boys had gathered to look; they were silent. Satish sat as frozen in her pose as the doll. The doll had blonde curls, blue eyes, fair skin, a pretty face, a dress of blue, fully pleated. It was a complete contrast with Satish's black curls, dark eyes, olive skin. Even Satish's breath seemed stopped, she was so motionless, but she was lovely in her ineffable love for the doll.

Now that the gifts were out Tai began to check and

repack her trunks. She had been outraged at the charges Bombay customs had assessed against her luggage, but now that things had been stolen she was still more vehement in her protestations. Mukund looked up saying, "I will file claims against the Bombay office, but it will be useless. We can prove nothing."

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The day moved quickly by. Tai and Madhurani were in the kitchen cooking, making preparations. Tomorrow was the principal day of Divali; all day we would feast, and in the evening, the darkest night of the month, Divali lamps would be lit.

The children played on the roof; there were quarrelsome cries, Anil and Pramila running down the stairs to their mother with complaints. Sujata, always in her mother's arms, kept up a small wailing till at last she fell asleep. The children were worn with the long train ride, and upset with having to play with so many children. Mukund was still deep in the book from the trunk, *Anna and the King of Siam*. Mandakini dozed too, sitting crouched against the wall, her sari hiding her head and face, Sujata lying across her lap, her face too hidden by the folds of the sari. The old servant carried Prabhavati about in her arms. I longed to help, but my age and inexperience kept me away from the kitchen although I could enter, for no god had been installed in this new kitchen. Tai prepared foods; Madhurani cooking them on her fire pot and on the kerosene burner, both of them working swiftly with graceful certainty.

At last Tai came to the front courtyard to set up the fort. The mud plinth was hard and dry, but not level. It took all Tai's cleverness to make the paper fort sit steady on the base, and to get story up upon story. But at last she had the gay toy ready for the dark, and the lighting on the next night. The children had been hanging over the railing on the roof watching, but they came down now and were crowding around with the same

anticipation American children feel with the trimming of a Christmas tree. They would have all Divali Day to wait for the lighting of the fort, for not a Divali light would be lit till the auspicious darkness of the night had settled down.

I wondered where everyone would sleep. There were fourteen of us. I knew that at night in these temporary quarters Madhu and Madhurani had spread their hold-alls on the floor in the main room and gathered their children about them. It was long before nine when everyone went to bed, then I discovered that the owner had given the use of their central room to Mukund and Mandakini so they had space of their own.

5

Tai wakened me singing a *veda*. "Isn't it early, Tai?" I asked.

"Yes," she replied, "but today is Divali. Each of us must have a special bath, and there are so many of us. The fire in the copper heater must be lighted, and we must get an early start." I was cautioned to stay in bed until I was summoned. It seemed forever. I opened the shutter a bit, the street lamp was lighted but flickering, its oil almost gone. It was an hour until I heard singing voices approaching, "*Godowan, godowan.*" Then our neighbor's deep bass voice was added, the heavy metal of the front gate clanging as he joined the group going around, the voices ringing clear, then fading in the distance.

I knew that it was the Indian woman's custom to do her devotions and have her ritual bath before the children in the family rose, the children were bathed next and all was serene and ready when the man wakened and took his bath. I occupied my mind with the ceremony of the bath, how it would proceed. Tai, I thought,

would be first, then Madhurani, then Mandakini. They, I thought, would bathe their baby girls as they took their own baths. Then would come Satish, the eldest granddaughter, then Pramila. Now it would be the time for the boys, but they would start with the youngest, Surat, then in turn, by age, Anil, Kiran, Prakash. Mukund, the younger son, would follow and last would be Madhu as the eldest male.

I waited and I waited. I read and I fidgeted. I was desperate, but I did not want to intrude on the privacy of the back courtyard. I put on my clothes at last and walked back, I felt I could wait no longer. Children were milling about, adults feverishly busy (the only time in my whole stay when I could use these two words) getting ready for the feast. I encountered Tai on the back verandah. "Akka," she said. "I told you to wait. Madhu is just going for his bath." Madhu was striding across the brick courtyard, his body bare except for a bath towel gathered around his loins. I could see the cord, his sacred thread, over one shoulder around his body. "Tai," I hissed in a whisper, "I'm desperate, so desperate." Crossly, she said, "Can't you wait just this once?" I turned back to our room at once, inside I cried a little. The Hindu world was so closed to me, I was so far from my family, from my familiar ways, and I was so desperate. But at times like this I must have driven Tai mad. An American woman lacks the patience, the endurance of her Indian sister.

It was some time before Tai came. Her hair was wet. I realized that she as head of the family had taken the bath after Madhu. "Come, Akka, why do you hold back?" I had kept my face down towards the book on my lap, dreading having her see the stains of tears on my face. She was still brusque with me. "Why this foolish crying? Come at once for your bath." In a low voice I said, "Tai, I'm desperate." She did not soften but said, "Come as quickly as you can." After the use of the toilet, I crossed directly over to the bathroom. Tai was waiting for me. "I can take my bath myself," I said,

but Tai said, "Get your clothes off, and I will pour the water on you. I can't bother with any of your childish notions today."

I had brought fresh undergarments with me. Directly I was through, I went back to our room and put on a silk suit. Then I sat on the edge of the bed again, waiting. When Tai came, she was impatient. "Akka, why are you not out with the family? We will soon be eating. I want to get you established and started before the family begins." I went into the main room and the namastes began. First Madhu made a full sweep of his arms, high in the air then full to the floor, touching my feet. Next was Mukund, followed by the boys, Prakash, Kiran, Anil, Surat. Then came Madhurani and Mandakini, their babes in their arms, Satish and Pramila followed and last Tai, for the first time gave me the deep namaste. All the Sathe family had bowed low before me in reverence to my age, and in respect to the Western woman called Akka, elder sister by their mother. Tears crept out of my eyes, slipping down my cheeks, as I stood motionless, silent. I knew that by Indian custom I the eldest must receive their homage, not giving any back. Now Tai did come close to me, standing before me, hiding my tears from them. She took the corner of her silken sari and wiped my eyes, saying, "Come, Akka, enjoy Divali with us."

Tai led me over to the side of the room to sit down. After the honor paid me by the family, I felt as if the trunk with the folded blanket was a throne. It was a very low trunk, and I would be sitting only a little above the family, but it set me apart; I still felt very Western, very American, very alien from this heart and core of Indian culture. On the low table before me, on the fresh white tablecloth was a thal and tumbler, the silver alight with the luster of years on end of polishing. There was a circle of small silver bowls, and a silver knife, fork, and spoon. Again I appreciated the honor paid me, but the knife, fork, and spoon set me apart. The Indian family would eat with their fingers, deftly, daintily, according to their age-old custom.

I looked at the family; they were gathered in front of the tiny silver image of Krishna sitting on the shelf, on his mirrored tray, on his little silver throne. He had not been installed here but they were worshipping before him. The family was chanting, it was a song asking blessing on their food, their family, their house. Now together the family raised their arms high and made the deep, full namaste to their god. Chubby Surat, slow as usual, did not get his namaste made till the others were done. "Very good, Surat," was the laughing comment, and chubby Surat laughed to himself with prideful satisfaction.

Madhu and Madhurani were tall and handsome in long coats—sherwanis. The coats were made of heavy silk with silver buttons, below there were the wide leg bottoms of silk pajamas. Both of them wore Nehru caps set straight on their dark hair. Madhu stood erect, serene, his handsome face smiling. Mukund had one hand on a hip, his feet a little apart, his face was quizzical as if he was about to launch into a lawyer's argument. The children were decked out gaily in the new clothes from the tailor's. Tai had on her pale blue silk sari with the silver stars, her golden chain in view. Madhurani had on the turquoise nylon with the new dark blouse and Mandakini had on the deep yellow nylon with her new blouse—both of them wore the new costume jewelry, but all had their familiar gold bangles.

Madhu and Mukund seated themselves close to me, Madhu next, then Mukund—they were squatted on a wide mat, along the wall. Tai seated herself. Then the children sat down on the new, narrow long mat ranging themselves by age, first the boys, then the girls. Prabhavati was safely asleep, but Sujata was pulling at her mother and crying. The mat stretched out into the room at right angles to my place. Tai was just in front of me. Before the children, on the cement floor, there was an elaborate design done in white chalk, scrolls, and flowers, circling about the stainless steel thal, the lota, the tumbler set at each place.

Madhurani led with the serving, putting the food

on my plate first, then on Madhu's, Mukund's, then on Tai's and on down the line of children. Mandakini followed, holding her baby close with her left arm, her left hand clutching the serving dish of food, her right hand free to serve. Both Madhurani and Mandakini stooped low as they served, as they had been trained. The atmosphere was genial, relaxed, but there was no conversation. This was the time to enjoy the feast. And a feast it was, with many rich dishes—spiced, hot curry of lamb, vegetables heavy with ghee, salads, sweets, offered again and again, and last ladous, the round balls of brown sugar, ghee, and slivered almond. This was Divali Day, and I feasted along with the family, no English cold boiled potatoes, no gray cauliflower, just the hot spiced foods, the lovely richness with no warning word this time from Tai about their effect on my digestive tract.

We were a long time eating. Then I was led out to sit on the front verandah. Madhurani and Mandakini would be feasting now, the old servant squatting, still hungry, waiting on the back verandah. All the younger children were asleep. Tai was sitting in the other bourgeois cane chair. Madhu and Mukund sat cross-legged each with his back against a pillar of the verandah; Prakash and Kiran leaned against Madhu, their father, somnolently.

. . .

It did not seem long until it was dusk. Madhurani, Mandakini, and the young children came out on the verandah, eager to light the Divali lamps. The Indian darkness fell swiftly so the children did not have long to wait. The small clay saucers were brought in on a big reed tray by Madhurani, each saucer ready with its oil and wick. She lighted them; the little symbols of the triumph of light over darkness flickered, then burned brightly. A row of the saucers was set along the top of the courtyard wall, it made a band of light, then Madhu and Mukund went back to the stairs to the roof top

We looked up to see their long arms stretching over the pierced cement railing, setting a row of lighted saucers close along the ledge of the roof. The children were with them, their voices high in their delight. They had made a second band of light.

Down they came, trooping to light-the fort. This Tai carefully tended. I, still seated on the verandah, couldn't see the fort for the children crowding around. Then they parted at Tai's direction, standing at the sides. There was the fort, the fort of the Maharashtrians, light streaming out its arched windows, its wide open doors. Four stories high it glowed red in the dark. Behind in the darkness stood the dark red coxcombs, towering like trees. The silent awe of the children, the darkness of the night, the magic lights from the clay saucers made the fort come alive. For an instant, I saw it centuries ago, brightly lighted, immense and tall, as I peered out from my Western world.

I heard Madhu say, "Aunti, stand." Wondering, I stood. At that instant he turned the button and the Tibetan lamp over my head lighted, its tracery shining down on my white hair. My eyes dimmed a little with tears, falling so easily that day. The tears slipping out brightened my gaze, for again all the family was making deep namastes to me. I was honored in their midst. Tai was saying, "Come, Akka, this is our time to be gay." I was smiling at her and she was laughing back at me.

Outside there was the rumble of wheels and the bells of tonga ponies. Madhu said, "Come, Aunti." There were three grown-ups in addition to the tonga wallahs in each tonga, and children packed in everywhere. I was beside Tai in the seat facing backward. Kiran was in my lap; Prakash in hers. The seat was swaying low and the tonga wallah had to chirrup and flick his whip to start the pony. All along the little street there were Divali lights, but our double row seemed brightest in our eyes.

Laughing we jolted along in the darkness, calling out at the displays of lights on every roof and step. The stalls in the bazaar were lighted with electric bulbs. The

merchants sat cross-legged like fat spiders in silken webs. Each stall had saris of every brilliant color hanging on its walls. But along the edges of the stalls, and wherever there was a ledge, clay saucers held Diwali lights.

We drove into a turning of a narrow alley and found ourselves in darkness by the river. It was black night, the dark, dark night before the first moon night. I could hear the Jumna lapping beside us, still high. We got out and the tongas drove away, bells on the horses jangling. My eyes now were accustomed to the dark and I could see that we were at the top of steps. Below us Madhu and Mukund, each with a child in his arms, were bargaining for a flatboat, with a pointed prow, lying low in the water, rounding sharply back on the flat, wide board floor, with a low railing. Two men with long poles were masters of the craft.

Madhu called, "Come." Down the steps we went, I moving slowly in the darkness, stopping astonished by the giant tortoises lining the bottom step, half out of the water, crawling up over each other's back. Then I was aware that women were crouching just above them, holding out to us tiny wooden rafts each with one or more clay saucers. Tai was explaining.

"It is an act of worship of the Jumna to send a light out on her waters; except the river Indus, which is a god, all the rivets of India are goddesses. The Jumna is one of the most sacred. Then, too, it is luck, *Akka*, to send out a light on the water."

I had my moneybag, but Tai checked my opening it. Madhu and Mukund were buying rafts. I lit mine, excitement seizing me, quelling my fear of the tortoises. It was they who were making the lapping sound; the Jumna lay black, silent as the night. It was the snapping of the tortoises' jaws I had heard as they tried to seize the clay saucers for the bits of fat. Boldly I reached out over them. Their backs were two and three feet wide and their nasty heads and legs were stretched out climbing. The little raft must float down the river lighted, to bring the blessing of the god. Our little fleet was soon launched; several of the rafts nudged over by the tor-

toises. Mine sailed brightly off, but I saw with dismay that Tai's had capsized. Her hand sought mine in the darkness. I pressed it hard, as I felt her body stiffen. "Tai," I said softly, "my light is bright; it will guard you."

Now Madhu was urging us onto the boat; the men with their poles were pushing the tortoises aside and holding the craft close to the steps. Tai was first on, steadying me. I, as usual, was wobbling. I wanted at once to sit down, but Tai urged me clear to the back of the wide floor. Madhu had Satish and Surat in his arms, Mukund had Anil and Pramila. Madhurani held Prabhavati tight, Mandakini had Sujata. Prakash as usual was close to his grandmother, and Kiran was close to me.

The fourteen of us were just settled on the back of the boat when a shadowy procession came onto the steps calling, "May we come out on your boat to immerse Kali?" Madhu called, "Come."

There were three young men on each side of the wooden platform. On it stood Kali, the dreadful black goddess. I could see that she was just as she was described in books: Kali, a black woman with four arms, having in one of her hands a scimitar and in another the head of a giant, which she holds by the hair, a third held down inviting approach, and the fourth held up bestowing blessing. She wore two dead bodies as earrings, a necklace of skulls and a girdle of skeletons—her wildly protruding eyes were red like blood, her tongue hung out to her chin—and under her ravening feet lay the prostrate form of her husband Siva.

The young men laughing with excitement lifted their clay Kali high, got her over the tortoises, but as they with their heavy weight were getting into the boat, it tipped so far to the side that I screamed. Tai pinched my knee hard, saying, "What will these young Bengali men think of an American woman?" But Tai was shivering herself with the evil presence of Kali. I knew that she felt as I did that the sudden tipping of the boat was Kali's evil laughing at us. A child could have been

swept away if they had not been so tight in our loving grasp.

"I didn't know you worshipped Kali here," I whispered.

Tai, never liking to admit Kali to Hindu worship, said, "These are East Bengalis," as if that dismissed the matter. I wished that I belonged to a religion that made the sign of the cross, and I did cross the fingers on both hands, holding them tight in their crossed position.

The boatmen began to pole out into the river. The current was running against us. The young men kept saying, "The middle of the river, the very middle, we must immerse Kali where the current is strongest." Our boat was making slow progress. We were being swept down the river. At last we were out with black water all about us, black night above us, all was black, silent for evil Kali.

Slowly the young men moved, then suddenly black Kali with her weighty body was over, down, down into the black water with a horrible sucking sound, our boat was tipping up, up—Kali was trying to drag us, at least one of us, down into the blackness, another skull for her awful necklace. I pressed my fingers tighter in the shape of the cross, saying to myself, "No, Kali! No! You love human sacrifice but none of the blood on this boat will be spilled for you."

The boat settled back onto the black Jumna. There was a moment of silence, then action began. The oarsmen were pulling hard in toward the shore, conversation was buzzing, the children were laughing.

I looked at the panorama of lighted buildings lining the river edge. There were three- and four-story houses; house after house, each with the central feature of steps coming down into the water, many wide steps under high arches. There were bright lights on the wide steps thronged with worshippers of the river. There were lights on balconies, lights in dim recesses, lights coming from behind pierced screens. There were cupolas and turrets atop fantastic architecture. Detail from all Oriental art was here in mad fantasy. The steps were

and we were in the lights, the noise, the crowding humanity of the main bazaar street on Divali night.

Laughing, we pushed our way along in the crowd, Madhu and Mukund each holding two children high in his arms. Madhurani and Mandakini held the baby girls up like torches. Prakash held Tai's hand, Kiran mine. No one seemed to notice that I did not have a palu over my shoulders, and in the throng no one could see that my skirt was not a sari. The worshippers by the river had been in white, but here in the bazaar there were brilliant saris of every color; my light gray silk suit was like the softer colors worn by the older women. There were dark Indian faces and black hair, but here and there was an older Indian woman, her face and hair as white as mine. Their white hair was flying like mine, not the oily smooth black hair of the young.

The family gathered together close by one of the shops. In the instant Madhurani had managed to buy a garland of roses, giving it to Tai, and Tai was saying, "Akka, I want to worship Divali night at the temple just across, and I want you to see the temple, the family will wait here." Taking tighter hold of my hand, we began to zigzag our way across and up the street, pushing our way along in the holiday crowd. The temple was not far. When we reached it, it was not a separate structure but a large carved stone arch in the row of buildings with ancient stone steps going up in darkness, going up at least twelve feet, up to a bright glare of light and a blare of noise. Crowds were surging up the old steps, wide but steep. Tai and I were swept in with them.

Up three steps, suddenly in the darkness a guard from either side pushed in front of us, crossing their pikes to bar our progress. I almost toppled backward, only Tai's firm grasp holding me. They pushed us over to the side of the wall and at once Tai began an altercation with them, the guards stoutly maintaining that only Hindus could enter the temple. I kept whispering, "Offer money." The guards argued that Tai should

bring me back wearing a sari; with the palu over my head, they would pass me in. Tai was vociferously indignant, saying, "I will not buy or deceive to get you into a temple, Akka." People on the steps were hesitating; with a quick move one of the guards pushed me with his pike tight against the dark shadowed wall. The other guard unbarred the way for Tai, saying, "Go and worship—we will hold her safe until you return."

The surging crowds swept Tai up the steps with them, she turning her face back toward us for a few steps, then she was carried up with the frenzy of the occasion. The guard was cautioning me, speaking in English, "Stand with your back to the wall, do not move, do not speak. I will stand in front of you and hide you. This could precipitate an ugly incident; on Divali night, feelings run very high." My heart was in my throat, beating fast. My gray silent figure merged with the dark shadow of the wall, the guard's long white shirt and long white dhoti shielded and hid me. He kept murmuring to me that it was too bad that my friend would not bring me back in a sari so that I could see the wonderful temple with its Divali decorations. This was an old, very old temple supported by about two hundred families, still strict in caste, jealously keeping their worship place from being polluted. Many besides the members worshipped here Divali night; this temple made a great show, but members of the congregation were all about, watching who entered.

No heads were turned in my direction, my heart beat a little slower, my eyes becoming accustomed to the darkness. My attention was caught by an entering group, a stout, large older man, his long black silk coat was like the prow of a ship forcing a masterful way through high water. The rounding sides of the boat-shaped procession were two enormous fat women in dark saris with golden borders a foot wide. The stern of the group was another large, dark silk-clad man. A white-clad young man was moving along with the group nervously rubbing his hands, shifting from one side to

the other. The center of the group was a pregnant woman, very young and so pregnant it seemed almost as if she was carrying a child, not the promise of one. Her bright pink sari, heavy with gold, rounded out over the coming child. Ahead of her, the father-in-law cleared the way; her elbows were held by her mother and by her mother-in-law, the older women supporting, lifting her heavy weight. Behind, guarding, seeming almost to be lifting too, was her father; the young man, so distracted, was the father-to-be. My eyes had taken in the relationship of the group, the rich clothes at a glance, but my eyes were fixed, my mind centered on the pregnant girl, on her lovely form that might bear a child this night. I looked at her face. She was luminous with beauty, she was in ecstasy, she was caught up in the light, she was transfigured on this Divali night.

The crowd poured ceaselessly up the steps. Some time had passed and Tai was not in sight. Then I realized that all the people were going up, none coming down. I began to be afraid that they might be held in the temple for hours. My heart rose up and began again its fast beating, when all at once Tai was there, at the outer arch, saying, "Come, Akka."

"Thank you," I murmured to the guard and slipped quickly out of the darkness into the light and clamor of the bazaar street, seizing Tai's hand with both of mine.

"Akka," she spoke sternly, "your hands are cold and you are shivering. There was nothing to fear."

"But you were gone so long, Tai," I said.

"The temple was so beautiful for Divali. I took my time worshipping. There is a separate exit; it was quite a distance back and I had to push against the crowd." We were across now. Madhu, Prakash and Kiran were gone. Madhurani was saying, "They will be back with the tongas."

Soon Madhu came, riding in one tonga, the boys in the other. As they stopped, people were trying to hire the tongas but soon our family was crowded in, and we were moving slowly along the crowded street. The

horses could walk no faster than the people, hemming them in on every side. Once out the main gate, onto the side road, the tongas moved faster and at last the road was clear enough so that the horses trotted along, their bells an echo of our evening. We went to sleep as soon as we were in our block.

6

Bright light from the crack of a partly opened shutter came across my bed and wakened me. Tai was gone from her bed and I thought that I must have slept the day away, but just then Madhurani tapped on the door and came in carrying the tray with my hot tea. "You have had a good sleep, you must still be weary after Divali Day," Madhurani chatted on. "Today is a celebration too, but it is not such a special one, with us, as it is with the merchants. It is the beginning of our fiscal year. This morning we will rest and this afternoon all the family will ride through the bazaar. I must go, Aunti, there are still many things to do."

I drank my tea slowly and that was the way the day went. The children played on the roof. We had a big dinner about eleven o'clock, then Tai insisted I nap. She had to waken me to tell me that the family was ready to go for the ride through the bazaar. Tai and I went out the front gate, Tai snapping the padlock shut. We walked quite briskly down the little street, I began to sweat with even that much exertion and was thankful that I had on a cool dress. But Tai, I noticed then, had on her orlon and cotton, green and white sari, the one I called her traveling sari.

I gasped with surprise and delight as we came out on the street; there was a camel cart, the family clustered about it laughing. Madhu was calling. "Come, Aunti. You were so interested in the camel carts we passed on

the way to the bazaar and you wanted to ride in every kind of transportation in India, so we have hired a camel cart to take us today, through the bazaar."

I was laughing too. I had feared Tai would not let me have this kind of ride. I had mentioned the camel carts each time we had passed them and she had said with a sniff, "Alka, smell those camels; they reek," and I would prod her. "Tai, I have never ridden in a camel cart; I have never seen camel carts before." She had dismissed the subject by saying, "They are gathering to take the pilgrims to the fair at Vrindovan."

Now, I, like the children, gazed at the cart and the camel. The cart was of rough construction with a pair of large wooden wheels behind, small wooden wheels in front; on top there was a crude wooden frame with a little house built on it, a two-story house with stout lattice walls closed in with chicken wire, and on top a sharp-peaked roof, thatched with rice straw. The peak of the roof was about six feet high, but with the two floors it was impossible to stand up inside. Tai said, "Don't be so foolish about things, Alka. These camel carts are devised to carry pilgrims. Twice as many can crouch in them with two floors."

I began circling around this strange coop. I noticed that slanted forward at a sharp angle from the small front wheels were heavy wooden shafts strapped securely to the crude wooden camel saddle, the saddle secured with stout bands around the camel's neck and around his belly just under his one hump. Two reins led back from the camel's mouth to the perch on front of the little house. The roof came out over the perch to shelter the driver more from sun than rain.

I looked at the camel; he was a dusty yellow-brown with a moth-eaten look. His long neck arched up to his thin head, held superciliously high, his nose elevated as if he could smell his own stench. His small eyes had a wild, hard glitter in them. I was so pleased with him that I moved close, stretching out my hand. In an instant, the camel's head darted down, like a snake's, and only the quick movement of the camel driver, pushing

himself in front of me, saved my hand from the yellow grinning teeth of the camel. I looked at the driver with thankfulness. He had a thin long shirt over a dhoti so long it trailed on the road. The garments were an even dirt color all over, and he was so near me that I could tell he smelled just like his camel. Over his shoulder he had a turkish towel and up above his black face, over his greasy black hair, he wore a Nehru cap.

There was laughing confusion until it came my turn. The first floor of the cart was a good four feet up from the road. The big hind wheels were too far out at the side for me to climb in, using their spokes as a ladder. I simply could not lift myself up, so Mukund, inside, pulled, and Madhu, outside, lifted.

When I crouched down to sit on the lower floor, I saw that Mandakini had brought durriss from the house and spread one on the floor so that we had a clean place to crouch. All the children wanted to sit upstairs, so they were lifted up. Mukund went up too, to guard the open end. Bits of straw kept sifting down on us through the crude wooden floor, as the children jostled for position overhead.

The camel driver climbed up to his front perch, hit the camel two or three times with a long stick, and the heavy wooden wheels began to turn with a swaying lurch. Just a few steps and the camel stopped dead still, the driver whipping in vain. Then like a deluge, the camel let loose a torrent of water. Tai said, "Disgusting."

Now the driver whipped the camel again and the cart creaked forward. The camel strode slowly along, the cart moving with an even but rough rhythm behind her. Once I got my old bones adjusted to the motion, it was soothing; the camel I knew was called "the ship of the desert," and this cart seemed shiplike to me too as we rocked along. It took us some time to reach the bazaar, but the children and I were not tiring of the ride.

When we reached the main street, our camel cart turned in under the high arched gate. Inside, in every stall, the merchants were sitting cross-legged on their

spotless clean white muslin floors, the wares of each stall well displayed. The street was thronging full of Indians, still in holiday mood. No one was buying, but many were standing about the stalls, visiting with the merchants. One merchant was adding in an account book as a man stood waiting; this was the day on which accounts were due and settled.

As the crowds parted to let our camel cart through, they would look back at us and laugh, to see this large family laughing too, enjoying a camel cart ride through the bazaar. Madhu had the driver make the full circuit of the bazaar, and drive the long way back to our block, 3 C Krishna Nagar. By then my bones were aching with the crouching on the hard board floor, and with the rolling lurch of the cart. It took Madhu on one side and Mfukund on the other to lift me down. The children squealed as their father boosted them out of the cart with a flourish. All of us talked gaily as we walked slowly back to our block.

The next morning, I wakened to the sound of "Govardhana" being sung as the neighbors shuffled along, in their sandals, around the blocks in the first morning light. Tai was up and gone from her bed. To-day was Brother-Sister Day, next in importance to the first day of Divali. So, again, there would be ritual baths and a special ceremony, and a feast to celebrate the significance of the occasion. Almost at once, Madhurani came with my bed tea; she was shining clean in a white sari, her black hair in its long braid shining too. She sat cross legged on Tai's bed, for a minute. I making mention of the gifts, Tai whispered to me that Madhurani had received lovely saris from two of her brothers and checks from the others. Tai had prefaced her telling with "Everything comes to Madhurani so easily, poor Mandakini has no brothers to give." Madhurani made a quick jerk of her head to me, and said, "My brothers are very loving and very generous with me. Now I must go, Aunti." The morning passed

I was dressed when Tai came for me. Madhu and

Mukund were standing talking; they had donned their festival clothes. The children were all about. The girls' eyes were darkened with kohl. Barefooted, they wore silver ankle bracelets, tinkling as they moved, and they had fine golden chains around their necks. Snjata's chain was doubled twice around her baby neck; it was the chain of gold Tai had bought in Bangkok. Madhurani was resplendent in an orange-pink sari with delicate narrow gold border, bangles and earrings of gold. Mandakini's sari was a deep lavender, almost a plum; she too wore gold jewelry. Tai had said, "I saw to it that the two daughters-in-law had equal jewelry."

There was a long ceremony of namastes and by the time it was over all of us were laughing; chubby, merry little Surat had started out with me, making a very good namaste—hands high, bowing, then low. The gesture to his grandmother was not so wide; he didn't enjoy all that stretching of his fat little tummy, and sensing the laughter he began to clown.

The children gathered around the shelves that held the image of their god. They chanted their prayer, made their namastes to Krishna. As they stood, the breeze caught one of the long calendar panels and swung it out; Surat seized the end as it billowed out, the paper tore in his hand. No remark was made and no mention or no scolding occurred later, although Madhurani admired and treasured the calendar.

The boys seated themselves by age on the long narrow mat with no jostling for position, each in identical posture, hands clasped, legs crossed, covered with silk from wrist to ankle, their bare feet turned so that the soles were visible. They were a resplendent quartet, with the two red brocade vests and the two black brocade vests. Behind them stood the two fathers in their long silk coats.

Elaborate chalk tracery had been made to mark and decorate the position of the thals. Madhurani and Mandakini now went to the kitchen and helped the little girls bring back thals with rice in the center and

the ornamental bits of food circling the plate. Then the little girls were bringing the serving dishes, offering more of each of the foods.

Satish bent low, serving her three brothers, her black curls hanging down on her neck but tied on top with a bright blue ribbon, the color of her American frock. As she stooped, the full frilled American petticoat was visible and a flip of the American ruffled panties. She was a fair lovely child.

Pramila in yellow, with yellow ribbon in her dark hair, followed serving her own brother Anil. Pramila was a pretty child but darker skinned. Madhurani was back of the little girls, smiling, bending over them, seeing that each move was correct, but with no words and no obvious directions. Tai, squatting near, now guided Prabhavati before the boys, and guided her hand in giving a sweet to each of her brothers, and Mandakini guided Sujata in giving a sweet to Anil, her brother. Their little girl bodies were bent by the loving hands of grandmother and mother as they offered to their brothers. The baby girls too had the flash of full slips and ruffled panties under their American frocks.

Tai whispered to me that once these boys had had their thread ceremonies (this could occur between their ninth and eleventh years), there would be a further symbolic ceremony on Brother-Sister Day. A cord then would be bound around the wrist of brother and sister to show the closeness of the tie between them. The children were solemn, the boys intent on the feast, the girls absorbed in their serving, but the elders were lightly laughing and talking.

Once the last rice and the kurd was served, the little boys still quiet got up and stood about like elders; the little girls went to the kitchen, sat against the wall as they had seen their mothers do, and ate. Once they were through, they came again into the main room. Then the boys bestowed their gifts to their sisters, each had in a pink tissue-wrapped parcel material for a frock.

Late that afternoon there was the excited chatter of the children outside our door. Tai said, "Akka, they want to get their fireworks. Tonight they fire them."

The sun was still shining, but for the night the children could hardly wait. Tai took out from our shelves the thin cardboard boxes and spread them out on her bed. We put some on my bed too. There was quite a supply of fireworks, most of them sparklers. They must have been durable because they stood the handling, however Prakash and Kiran claimed and protected the rockets and the Catherine wheels. The neighbor's boy and the twin girls were in and out, quite boastful that they too had "lots of fireworks."

It was a pleasant relief that Indian dark came swiftly, soon after the sun dropped out of sight.

The parents made no delay, but began helping the little ones light sparklers; the older children managed for themselves, starting with torpedoes, throwing them against the courtyard wall. Some of them exploded, many did not, and the older neighbor boy kept saying, "Here, let me throw it. I can make them go off." Prakash and Kiran were deaf to his remarks, busily throwing, then starting on firecrackers. Satish and Pramila still had their festive bows in their dark curls, but they had on simple old frocks and the boys too were in their play clothes. Madhu and Mukund each held their baby girls and they themselves had cotton shirts and white, long cotton dhotis.

The twin neighbor girls did not have much chance, even the sparklers were snatched from their hands by their brother whose constant call was, "Here, let me do it." I sat back on the verandah, shivering a little in the flash and noise of the fireworks. Above the wall I could see rockets in the sky, but most of my attention was on our own front courtyard. The little children were waving and whirling their sparklers, their eyes glittering with excitement. The fathers even held sparklers in the hands of the baby girls, Prabhavati flinging hers wildly about, Sujata hiding her face from hers, and whimpering.

I imagined burns from the crackers and disfigurement from the hot wires of the sparklers, but kept from speaking; however, I did sigh with relief when the last

one was done. Then Tai came out of the house with a big handful of tissue paper; the children were standing about the little fort. It stood there, untouched, in spite of all the mad racing there had been in the little courtyard. Tai lifted the top story, stuffed the paper into the little fort, put back the top story, stood a minute silent, the children about her silent, too. Then she stooped, lighting a match; in one instant she had the little fort a glorious blaze. The tissue paper inside burned brightly, the light glowing through the little arched windows and doors. The children began to circle and dance and shout. Now the fort itself was in flames. In an instant it was gone, just a few black ashes left on the clay. Tai came directly in, the children fell silent, following her. All was quiet as we went to bed.

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Each day of Divali there were special things to do; today was "Govardhana Fair." Tai was relaxed, the main ceremonies of Divali, the feasting, were over now as she said, "The rest of the holiday will be fun for us, Akka. The fair we are going to see today is a religious fair, a mela we call it. Lord Krishna's chariot will be taken out in procession in memory of his lifting up Govardhana Mountain to save Gokul and Mathura from the torrential rains. The temple is called Dwarkadhish, the dwelling of the Lord of Dwarka because Lord Krishna was the King of Dwarka."

The strange names confused me always, but today Tai was in such a good mood that I could ask more questions. "Tai," I said, "I thought we were going to Vrindawan."

"Yes, Akka, we are Vrindawan is the name of the village, Gokul is the district, and Govardhana is the name of the mountain. You remember that when Lord Krishna as a babe was carried away from Mathura to save his life, he was then taken to Gokula, a pasture district on the banks of the Jumna near Mathura. Krishna played and grew up there. It was at that time

that he played so many pranks with the gopis. On one occasion while the gopis were bathing, Krishna climbed up into a tree carrying their clothes with him, and would not descend until they came to him naked to beg their return. As he grew up a handsome youth, the gopis all became enamoured of him. He spent most of his time sporting with them, and married seven or eight of them. But his first and favorite wife was Radha."

Tai went on, "One of his pastimes was the circular dance called rasamandala in which he and Radha formed the center, while the gopis and gopias [cowherds] danced round them. It was at this time, also, that he slew the great serpent Kaliya, which infested the banks of the Jumna. He also persuaded Nanda, the cowherd, to give up the worship of Indra, and to worship the mountain of Govardhana, which sheltered the shepherds of Gokula and their cattle. Indra, enraged, poured down rain on them, but Krishna lifted up the mountain of Govardhana and held it over them upon his finger as a shelter for seven days." Tai now began to tease me. "Oh, Akka, always you press me for more and more detail. Already you know more about India than most of our people."

We had been sitting on the front verandah enjoying the coolness of the morning. About ten, Madhu came telling us that our transportation had come. He too was in a teasing mood, saying. "Annti, for your sake, I should have hired a camel cart again. You were so taken with it. But come, we have a tonga and two rickshaws. I think tongas would be a little faster, but the rickshaw driver begged so for the chance for him and his brother, I thought you wouldn't mind."

The three vehicles were waiting at the side of the road. A camel cart was just passing; I tried to count the Indians squatted on the two floors. Tai interrupted me saying, "Come, Akka." I climbed in but persisted about the number of passengers in the camel cart. "Oh, Akka," Tai said, "they are forbidden to carry more than sixteen but for these religious fairs they crowd in as many as they can."

Ahead of us was the tonga, its bells jingling with *Madhurani*, *Mandakini*, and six of their children. Behind us in the second rickshaw rode Madhu and Mukund, holding Surat and Anil in their laps. The road was dusty with traffic, for there was a steady procession of tongas, packed full of men, women, and children; rickshaws piled full too. The fifty-two camel carts were creaking up and down the road; from dawn to dark that day, they would be going back and forth between Mathura and Vrindawan. Rattling busses passed us jammed full, there were groups on bicycles, and people shuffling along on foot.

Tai teased me about my staring so long and hard at the bands of Marwari women, in their flowing skirts of many yards of bright cotton material. The women were a sturdy, gay lot with a *halla-sari* over their heads or over their shoulders. They had heavy silver earrings dangling from their dark ears, silver chains and bracelets, but it was their full, full skirts billowing about that took my eye. The red and yellow skirts were ankle length, but I could see their heavy silver ankle bracelets as the skirts whirled and tipped with their walking.

The countryside looked deserted, the crops had been harvested; there were few roadside trees, and no mud hut villages. When we came to Vrindawan, we entered directly into the temple grounds with just a glimpse of a few dusty bungalows outside. There was a wall about the extensive parklike area, packed with Hindus all in carnival mood. Booths and barkers were all about selling food; and there were parking areas for the vehicles, these situated so you could sit in your rickshaw when you were tired of walking, and still see the crowds.

At once we left the rickshaws and tonga, and in a group pushed our way to see the principal sight of the fair, Lord Krishna in his chariot. On this one day of the year, Krishna was taken out of the temple, seated in his chariot and taken in procession. I had been afraid that we would miss this principal event for Tai had not made clear that the whole day was spent in the procession. At the propitious moment in the morning, the high gates of the walled garden about the temple Dwarkadhish

were opened, devout worshippers, all of them men and boys, stood waiting; they seized the heavy white ropes and slowly pulled the heavy chariot out into the sunshine of the fair grounds. About midday, that also at a propitious moment, the ropes were reversed, and the procession back began, for Lord Krishna must be in his temple before the sun set.

When we reached the chariot, it was on its way back to the temple. I was amazed at the sight of it, only the gilded circus wagons of my youth prepared me for the gaudy spectacle. Here was a chariot as large as half a dozen of the circus chariots, towering three stories high. Its main structure was carved of wood, gilded and intricate in detail; there were silk brocade hangings; there were lanterns; there was a profusion of ornaments that my eyes could not comprehend. High at the front and the back, as if carrying the chariot with their wings, were cupids. They, I knew, were likenesses of Kama-deva the son of Lakshmi, the Indian Cupid, represented as a young boy with wings, and a bow and arrow.

I kept telling Tai, "I can't see Lord Krishna," and she kept saying, "See, Akka, there he is on the top story, just in the center." But there was the gilded roof over his head, and all the silken trappings, till I could not really make him out. The heavy white ropes lay stretched out on the ground; they were sixty feet long and four inches through in diameter. Indian men, a few boys with them, moved up, took up the ropes and began to tug; there were at least two hundred men. At last the huge chariot began to move, an inch at a time. We had come up just after the ropes had been reversed to pull Lord Krishna, now in the guise of King of Dwarka, back into his temple Dwarkadhish. The ropes were not put down again, but the chariot was pulled forward just a few feet each time. Men would leave the ropes from time to time, others springing forward to take their places. These men were all in spotless white shirts and dhotis; all of them were laughing, happy—this was a gay religious privilege. The grimy dusty pilgrims that rode in the camel carts did not join in this temple rite.

The crowds were thick about the chariot, but once it

was moving, they pressed closer. I, fearful of the enormous heavy wheels, drew back pulling Tai with me, but craning my neck to see. The people were throwing fruit up into the chariot, and attendants in the chariot were throwing it back into the crowd, people pushing and grabbing to get it. Tai told me that this fruit (most of it was oranges) was blessed. A few enterprising pilgrims had baskets with light ropes which they tossed up, having the basket pulled up, then let down into their own hands. This activity was on the first and second stories of the chariot. On the third, the top story, Lord Krishna reigned alone except now and then an orange thrown by an overly enthusiastic pilgrim fell into the maze of his trappings.

Some of the Hindus were going in through the big gate of the temple garden, walking in the grounds. When the family started in that direction, Tai drew me back saying, "Come, Akka, let us go and sit in our rickshaw for awhile."

"A rest will be welcome," I said, making no other comment, but I knew that Tai did not want to chance an incident with my presence in the temple garden. I was the only non-Hindu in this enormous mass of people and this was an ancient sacred place, one not yet disturbed by tourists. I felt very alone among the thousands of Indians, but Tai, knowing my feeling without words between us, took tight hold of my hand and kept tight pressure on it. Then she sent the rickshaw driver to buy some paper cones of ground nuts and grains roasted together, salted and spiced hot. We began laughing and talking as everyone else was doing. Hawkers were moving through the crowd holding high light wooden frameworks hung full of papier-mâché toys. Fathers were buying, reaching up for a selection, putting them in the upstretched hands of their children. Everyone was eating. the hot, spicy smell of Indian food was strong in the air. And as at all fairs there was dust, thick in the air, stirred up by the shuffling feet of the crowd.

At last the family came back to our rickshaw, the

children appearing first, pushing and squirming through the mass of people. Madhu had 'Surat in his arms; Minkund held Pramila crying and kicking her feet against him so that her little silver ankle bracelets were tinkling. Mandakini's thin face was animated but tired looking; Sujata, in her arms, was smiling and kicking too. Madhurani held bright-eyed Prabhavati high; Madhurani sailed like a ship in the sea of people, unperturbed, certain of her destination which was the tonga just back of us. There Madhurani had containers holding a supply of food. The men ranged out and brought back tikia, the deep-fat fried potato balls with a bit of hot spiced meat in the center that Tai had told me about. All of us were sitting or squatting in the rickshaws or the tonga, eating the picnic fare. We kept waving our hands to keep the flies away just as we used to do when we ate at fairgrounds in the United States before sprays were manufactured. Tai let me feast on the tikia; I knew she felt the hot fat had sterilized it. Scraps of paper were all over the ground, but Mahurani gathered ours and put them neatly in a container to dispose of with rubbish when we were home.

The children, rested with their fill of food, wanted to wander about again, and Tai said to me briskly, "Come, Akka, there is another temple on the grounds, the Temple of the Golden Pillar. You and I will walk over to it; years ago I saw it and as I recall you can see the pillar from the door. It will be a sight for you."

As we pushed our way through the crowd that seemed to drift without direction, I discovered that there were graveled paths and even a narrow metal road, but most of the area was bare ground, dust being raised in whirls by the bare feet and by the sandals.

The temple was a low structure which we circled round, entering from the other side through a wide garden area paved with ancient dark stones. There were many people here but they were not moving, just standing. Tai took my arm in hers, pulling me close to her saying, "Akka, keep by me and walk slowly. Don't turn

your head and stare, but I think if we move along this way you can see the golden pillar through that wide opening. It is the main entrance to the temple."

Tai spoke again as we moved slowly along. "This is not the day for this temple so there will not be a crush inside. Of course some will come to worship here. I hope there will not be so many that they hide the golden pillar from your view."

She slowed her steps still more; we were barely moving. I turned my eyes, but not my head, looking into a rectangular hall, bright with electric light. I was aware that there was an altar at the end and many worshippers, but my eyes focused on the golden pillar. It was twenty feet inside and twenty feet tall. I thought I could just about encircle it with my arms. The pillar was bright shining gold; pure gold, not carved or ornamented, not machine cast, but as if it had been beaten with ancient, primitive tools into a pillar, a golden pillar.

It was out of my sight now, and I turned my face toward Tai, questioning her in a low voice, but she had no answers for my questions. All that she knew was that this was the Temple of the Golden Pillar, and that the pillar was ages old and kept its bright sheen without polishing. We had turned now and were walking across a causeway; below us there was an enormous empty tank made of stones black with age; again I questioned.

"Oh, Akka, so many questions. We just accept these things; we do not ask about them. All that I can tell you about this tank is that when the mela is held for the Temple of the Golden Pillar they have a fight to the death in this tank between an elephant and a crocodile." I stopped and leaned over the heavy stone parapet, looking at the dark stone tank below.

"It would be a fearsome sight, Tai. Which animal wins the fight, the elephant or the crocodile?"

"Akka, Akka, always questions. I can answer that, however; the elephant always kills the crocodile."

On the other side of the causeway there was another open square paved with stone and back of it another

temple, low and ancient; its doors were closed, there was no one about it, and there was wide paving on both sides. Unwillingly, Tai followed me as I started to walk around the ancient structure. All at once we were away from the crowd, we were alone, my slippers and Tai's sandals echoed as they clicked and clacked on the old stones. The dark old walls shut off the sunshine; we kept walking on around, I shivering, took hold of Tai's hand. Squatting before a niche in the wall was a grimy sari-clad Indian woman. The niche held just a reddish blob of stone, a few small marigolds scattered on it. The woman did not make the slightest motion as we passed her, but I could see under the palu that was over her head that she was a withered, brown, an old, old Hindu woman. She was worshipping an old, old stone Kali.

On the other side of the temple there was a gate in the high wall. Tai pushed it open and we slipped through and found ourselves again in the crush and clamor of Govardhan Fair. I was tired and so was Tai when we reached our rickshaw. We climbed in and rested; the family was out looking about.

The sun was well over to the west when Tai said, "Come, Akka, let us go once more and look at Lord Krishna in his chariot." We found the chariot within a few feet of the temple gate. Now the men were pulling just a few inches at a time but the crowd was still tossing up fruit and receiving it back. I looked at the towering gilded chariot with its golden promise. I looked at the brocade hangings concealing from my Christian eyes even a glimpse of Lord Krishna as the King of Dwarka. This was Indian religion, opulent, hidden, the mystery of the East.

The family joined us as we stood there; all the children were tired and dirty. Madhu said, "Come, Aunti, it is time for us to go back to Mathura."

Once more we pushed our way to our rickshaws and the tonga and began the ride back. The crowd did not seem diminished, but there were many vehicles going back as we were. A few stragglers were still walking

along the road toward the fair; a couple of tongas passed us filled with young men, laughing as everywhere, young bloods out for the evening; and a couple of cars, the first we had seen that day, scooted by raising such a cloud of dust that Tai quickly pulled her palu over her head and over her mouth, coughing a little as she did so.

7

Tai had said that this day after Govardhan Fair was to be a rest day for the following day the family was planning to go down to Agra by bus to see the Taj Mahal. But the morning was no more than well started when she proposed a trip to the bazaar to buy some food supplies.

"You will enjoy going with me," Tai said. "This is the day that the people who live in Mathura, as many of them as are able, and the pilgrims who have come in, 'go around Mathura.' " The "going around" could begin or end anyplace but the line of march was the one followed for hundreds of years. Tai told me that the quickest time a strong man used to walking could make it was four hours; it took most people eight because they didn't walk steadily; they would stop and rest and eat from time to time. Some women with children and some very feeble people would start at the first break of day and it would take them until dark to make the round.

It was close to ten when we set out in the rickshaw. We were the *only people on the road* until we came to the branch road that led to Krishna's birthplace. There we saw our first pilgrims. They were women and children, not just one child or two, but babes in arms, toddlers, and many larger ones, and there were old people black and withered and pushing themselves with effort. They looked straight ahead as our rickshaw wheeled along. By the side of the road, we saw men

setting up little stands and some women squatting, offering a few bananas on trays. Once in the bazaar, Tai made quick work of the shopping, buying vegetables and fruit. We returned to our block the way we had come. Already more people were walking on the pilgrimage and this time I noticed that all were walking in the same direction.

Madhurani had fed the younger children, all of them were napping, and our meal was ready. I did not resist Tai's edict that I must nap, and she too lay down. When we awakened, Madhurani served all of us lime juice made like lemonade, "lime squash" Tai called it in proper British fashion. Then Tai said, "Akka, I'm sending for the rickshaw, I want to take you down to the corner to see the pilgrims; they will be in full stream now."

Out on the road that had been so full of vehicles yesterday going to the fair, there was no traffic today, but as we drew near the pilgrims' route, I gazed in astonishment. A wide ribbon of Indians was spread across the metal road, turning up the dusty side road to Krishna's birthplace. Our driver brought us close. I do not think it would have been possible to cross this tight packed mass of humanity, and it would have been impossible for a rickshaw or any vehicle to move along with them, much less go the other way. On and on they came, moving without individuality. There were many men in their white clothes and there were spotless saris, and grimy saris, and many bright-colored saris so the ribbon was variegated; the endless movement made it flutter as in a breeze. There seemed to be no conversation, everyone was intent on his religious duty.

This mass of people moved in one direction, with one mind: to "go around" Mathura. Along came a group of women, poor women I could tell by their coarse saris; they were chanting "Govardhan, Govardhan," the same song that I had heard sung as our neighbors went around the block in the early morning. There was no sign of any break in the ranks. This was

India, this was the power of India, her people marching in a solid mass, walking together with deep religious fervor.

Tai and I sat silent, watching. She said, "Akka, for hours they have come along the road like this; for hours more they will come." I could tell that she, used to India's customs, was moved deeply by the sight as was I. At last she said, "Come, Akka, we must go back to the family."

Agra

THE NEXT MORNING I wakened with great anticipation; today I was to see the Taj Mahal. Most travelers said it was worth the trip to India just to see the Taj; the ones who spoke in prose calling it the "finest monument of conjugal love and fidelity in the world," the ones who spoke in verse calling it "a poem in stone," "the perfect pearl." Tai and the family were moving about in the easy pattern of their everyday life. There seemed to be no excitement, no anticipation with them as there was with me. I put on one of my Indian cotton dresses for I knew that we were going by bus, but Tai said, "Silk today, Akka." So I put on the suit of French silk damask and added my black amber beads as an extra gesture of dressing up, and at the last minute Tai put on one of her best Kashmir saris. The fourteen of us crowded into three rickshaws and went in them to the Delhi-Agra road that skirted Mathura.

The bus was large, but when we climbed on as it stopped by the roadside for us, I saw that all the passengers were Indians; American tourists went down to

Agra by car or plane. Trees lined the road, dusty on each side of the center metal strip. The fields had been harvested before Divali; there was no one in them, nothing on them; the mud hut villages looked as ancient as the land. The sun was shining down from the bright blue sky that seemed close over our heads. Once in a while a car whizzed by us and once we passed a camel; this time his cart was a small square single platform, six Indians squatting on it; over their heads held by slender poles, was a top with fringe, an Indian version of the surrey with the fringe on the top. We passed a few tongas, the usual cows and goats, guided and prodded by drivers, and Indians walking along the road, not single file at the edge but using the metal strip and leisurely moving out of the way at the insistent honk of the bus horn. It was just thirty miles from Mathura to Agra, but we made slow time with innumerable stops to pick up passengers waiting by the roadside. The children were silent, absorbed in the ride.

At Agra, we found a large bus station with passengers everywhere just as in the railroad stations, most of them so poorly dressed they might be beggars. I had heard tales of the hordes of beggars; we were not approached, but Tai dropped several coins into the hand of the blind man sitting with his back against the wall. Madhu and Mukund went away at once, leaving us in a tight little group; the plan was that they would rent a station wagon for the day. They returned with a rickety old car, its wooden body in the last stages of decay; the driver seemed as rickety as his vehicle, a nervous man of indefinite age, in dirty shirt and trousers.

We were to go first and have dinner and then set out in the station wagon for our sightseeing. We rode some distance, then pulled into a parklike area before a shabby hotel suggested by our driver. Tai said, "Alka this is not for you." The driver became voluble, insisting that many, many American tourists came to this hotel, so we got out. We were led to the "dining room." It was a large tent filled with many large tables. We were the only people there, although there were a good many birds picking crumbs on the tables.

We arranged ourselves at one of the tables and waited. Tai began at once in fret and fume, but no one in the family wanted to take action. At last Madhu did go back to the hotel and returned with a harassed waiter who said that meals were served at English hours, but they would take care of us, and they would serve Indian as well as English food. After another interminable wait with the children running all about, two waiters came with enormous trays and an enormous amount of food which they put family style on the table. One plate of boiled vegetables and a piece of something that was supposed to be meat was put before me. The family ate heartily although the food was much poorer than their home cooking. Madhurani and Mandakini especially seemed to relish it. The birds did not land on our table but kept close, waiting for us to go. The meal ended with little saucers of watery ice cream; the children did not touch it, and after a quick little shake of the head by Tai, I left mine too.

Madhu and Mukund went in to pay the bill and Madhurani and Mandakini went back of the bushes to take care of their baby girls. Then we packed ourselves in the station wagon and started out for Sikandra to see the mausoleum of Akbar. I could tell by this choice that my preference was considered. Akbar was my favorite emperor. Madhu's choice would come next; he wanted to visit a new Hindu temple. Then we would go to Agra Fort, and last, as a climax, we would see the Taj Mahal. Sikandra was a village five miles from Agra, so as we rode I reviewed Akbar in my mind. The family knew that he was a great emperor but even Tai was not interested in more than that. I was amazed at the small knowledge that these educated Indians had and at their lack of interest, but Tai was just as amazed at my interest. I wondered for a minute if it was because they were such devoted Hindus and Akbar a Mogul, but almost at once I let my thoughts drift to Akbar himself. It had been more than twenty years since I held the English translations of *Akbar's Institutes* in my hands and marveled at the wisdom of this ruler. "Crowned emperor at fourteen, with a glorious reign of fifty years,

Akbar purified the administration of justice, enjoyed absolute tolerance in religious matters [he had Hindu, Moslem, and Christian wives], abolished oppressive taxes and reorganized and improved the system of land revenue which made him the greatest ruler India ever had."

I opened my guidebook to refresh my memory and read, "The mausoleum of Akbar was commenced by Akbar and completed by his son Jahangir at a cost of 15 lacs of rupees [15 million dollars]. It has an area of more than 120 acres and is enclosed by high walls about 772 yards long, each side with an imposing gate in the center of each." I skipped over the rest of the text reading at the end, "The emperor died in 1605 and was laid *in the grave with his eyes towards the rising sun and not towards Mecca as is the usual Mohammedan custom—the sun being an important factor in his Din i-Ilahi or 'Divine Faith.'*"

We got out of the station wagon and stood before the main gateway, the high rectangular structure of red sandstone profusely decorated with white marble. Above the gateway was the Naubat Khana or Music Gallery where the pipes and drums were sounded in honor of the dead. At each corner of the gateway rose a tall minaret of white marble 86½ feet to the tip of the roof.

Entering we found ourselves in a garden overgrown with bushes and palm trees. Before us was a long sandstone walk to the mausoleum, with a small marble pool in its center. We strolled towards the impressive red sandstone mausoleum with its many small minarets; then entered a huge room where rested the cenotaph of Akbar the Great. The floor was in a diamond pattern, black and white marble; the raised platform repeated the diamond design as if emphasizing and pointing to the carved pedestal just beside the cenotaph, the pedestal on which had rested under a canopy of gold and silver brocade, the diamond known as the Koh-i-noor. The pedestal was empty. Tai spoke up bitterly, "And now the Koh-i-noor rests in the crown of Queen Elizabeth II. It should have been returned when Britain

left India." I gazed at the cenotaph murmuring to myself, "Akbar, Akbar."

As we rode back to Agra, I read again from the guidebook: "The ancient city of Agra was on the east, the left bank of the river Jumna, and dates back to the time of Krishna and Mahabharat, about 3000 B.C. The modern city, on the west or right bank of the Jumna, was founded by the Emperor Akbar in 1558 A.D. and was named for him. Akbarabad, the name it still retains."

We rode through the so-called new part of the city, but it seemed old to me and tumbling down. We found the new Hindu temple Madhu wanted to see on a very poor street. There were scaffolding and huge pieces of marble all about an ornate structure. We joined the crowds pushing through the litter of building materials, Madhu telling me proudly that the temple had been abuilding for forty years. Madhu explained further that Hindus from all over India were contributing the funds for the temple. Madhu's eyes were shining, and he called my attention again and again to the elaborate carving in many colored marbles. The family too was more interested in the utter confusion of this modern building than they had been in the calm majestic monument of Akbar. They called my attention to the fact in every way without saying it in words that here in the midst of the Mogul splendor of the past, Hindus were building a temple, a beautiful temple. Outside on the street, marble carvers were selling their wares. Tai did not check me but in fact was pleased when I bought a small replica of the Taj fitted into a neat wooden box. To me, it seemed part of the diversity that was India that I should buy the miniature Mogul Taj while standing at the entrance to a Hindu temple.

Now we drove on to Agra Fort. Our driver let us out at Amar Singh Gate, the main entrance to the fort. Enormous metal gates stood open, guarded by Indian soldiers; I looked up at the huge towers, the high battlements; the fort looked strong and ready to withstand a siege, but its age was revealed by good sized trees grow-

ing out of crannies in the walls. The gate was high and huge enough for an elephant with a howdah; I felt very small and very new as I walked in and struggled up the steep ramp inside with Tai's help. Soldiers' quarters were all about but soon we were up into the park filled with white marble buildings, most of them built by Shah Jahan. There was palace after palace, there was the Hall of Special Audience, the Hall of Public Audience, there were mosques.

The family scorned hiring a guide, Tai saying, "After all, we are not a tourist party," but I listened when I could to the chatter of the voluble Indians with the numerous American groups, picking up bits of their patter here and there as I attached myself to them while the family stood placidly enjoying the ancient beauty and the children ran about at will. I paid especial attention to the Anguri Bagh or Grape Garden that stretched in front of the white marble Khas Mahal, the Private Palace. The Grape Garden comprised a court 220 feet by 170 feet divided by four marble foot paths, centered with a tank with five fountains. The garden beds, really a parterre, were not planted so the marble edging could be seen clearly, an enormous fret design. The guide's words that took my attention were, "The soil of the garden is extremely rich, as it is said it was brought from Kashmir."

Here too the attention of Madhu and Mukund was caught because up on the platform before the palace were heavy wooden doors set in the marble. They too listened to the guide: "These steps lead to the underground chambers, in which the Emperor and Zanana found refuge from the fierce summer heat of Agra, and also to the gloomy dungeons—the place where slave girls were brought to the hands of the executioner, the silent Jumna receiving their lifeless bodies " I thought at this moment of Jahangir, son of Akbar, father of Shah Jahan, listed in the guidebook as "passionate and a drunkard. his harem consisted of nearly 6,000 women " Much to the disappointment of all, the ancient wooden doors were padlocked; the gloomy depths as usual were more tempting than the chaste white marble buildings with

their peristylar halls, their engrailed arches, and all their gilding and their carvings.

Everyone was looking at our party; the boys were dressed in their white silk Divali outfits with their red and black brocade vests, the little girls in fine, full frocks of white material. Tai urged them to stand for a minute on the marble steps; the boys formed a background standing on the top step against a double pair of marble pillars. Satish before them laughingly raised her arms high above her black curls, her little wrists encircled with her gold bangles, her little hands extended, the graceful promise of the future.

Now Tai led the way to the Samman Burj, the Jasmine Tower, where Shah Jahan was imprisoned till he died. All the white marble walls, parts of the pillars, capitals, and architraves were richly inlaid with semi-precious stones. The roofs were of marble and were once highly decorated in gold and colors. We went to the cabinet first, a piece of dramatics devised by Tai, for here through the luminous stone I was to have my first view of the Taj Mahal. This stone had been set in a wall for Shah Jahan when his sight was failing. It reflected and enlarged the image of the Taj. I stood in line waiting my turn, the tourists fading from my vision as I thought of Shah Jahan in this very room. Then I looked through the luminous stone; there was the Taj Mahal floating in the air in a golden haze. Tai's voice roused me.

"Akka, you must move on, so many are waiting, come, we will go to the octagonal room, there you will have a full view of the Taj."

I kept my eyes down as we walked across the marble platform to the exquisite octagon, wide open doors filling each side; there, standing, I raised my eyes and looked across the Jumna at the Taj. It was a lovely distant view, the Taj Mahal was gleaming in the sun against the blue sky. Its beauty made me silent. I heard Tai murmuring to me, "Was it worth coming to India to see the Taj?"

Now I was eager to see the Taj at close range, and the family too was ready to go. We had to get in the

station wagon and rattle over the bridge. I kept being afraid that the Taj would come into sight while we were in these sordid surroundings, but there were tall trees about, and I was careful not to look too.

Out of the station wagon, Tai wanted me to linger and look at the inscriptions on the entrance gate—black slate on marble, slabs 80 feet high, texts from the Koran inviting the Pure of Heart to enter the Gardens of Paradise, but I wanted at once to see the Taj.

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I was not prepared for the beauty of the garden, for the dark, tall cypresses, for the long marble tank of water. Keeping my eyes down again, waiting for the moment to view, this time I was caught, caught by the reflection of the Taj in the water, the Taj indeed a pearl.

I looked long at the water view, then slowly lifted my eyes to the pure beauty, the perfect beauty of the Taj Mahal. Tai stood by me, not speaking; the family went on, tourists pushed by me. I had thought the Taj would not catch my fancy but it had done more, it had caught my heart, my soul; I was praying to God.

Tai and I walked slowly toward the Taj; the soft red of the sandstone paving, the deep green of the cypress trees, the light green of the grass all enhanced the pearl color of the Taj Mahal. The slender minarets at each corner pointed to the blue sky. The dome seemed a softly rounded breast. The Taj Mahal floated in the heavens. Tourists were pushing past us; they roused me from my dreams. I noticed for the first time the red sandstone buildings flanking the Taj on each side; they had been half hidden by higher trees. We climbed the twenty-one steps up to the huge marble platform on which the Taj stands; at each corner the minarets were octagons, and the Taj itself was an octagon. With my first close view, I was charmed with the color, the soft color of the pearl, with the luminosity of the pearl. Then I became aware that all the surface was a tracery

of inscriptions from the Koran framed by marble, carved in flowers and leaf designs, and with further adornment of pietra-dura work, the delicate inlay of precious and semiprecious stones, of gold and silver set into the marble. Bemused, it was as if the other people, staring, talking, were not there; I was not even aware of Tai until she said, "Come, Akka, let us go inside."

We walked through the small door in the marble fretwork that filled the huge arched opening. Inside, in the dim light, we gazed at the carved marble screen, octagonal in shape, that surrounded the cenotaphs, Mumtaz Mahal, the lady of the Taj in the center, Shah Jahan close by. Tai whispered to me—it seemed desecration to speak aloud—that the actual tombs were in the lower chamber. I was so absorbed with the delicate tracery, the transparent quality of the marble screen carved mostly in jasmine flowers, that I hardly heard her. This was the tomb, the expression of love raised by Shah Jahan over the grave of his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal. She had died giving birth to their fourteenth child, after eighteen years of marriage. Shah Jahan in intense grief, he and his courtiers in the white habiliments of deepest mourning, had refused to transact any business of state. No music or festivities were allowed, the wearing of jewels, the use of perfumes and luxuries of all kinds were forbidden. In two years his hair turned silver gray. Then in his grief he turned to building this living poem in memory of his beloved wife.

We walked down the long ramp into the gloom of the lower chamber. This I knew was infested with bats and it seemed dark enough for them to be constantly in flight. Old Indian guards were shuffling about with dim lanterns, their mumble was in English, but the part of it that caught my ear was that the empty pedestal beside Shah Jahan's tomb formerly held the Star of India. Another reason, I thought, for the Indians to dislike us. For the Star of India, a Ceylonese blue star sapphire (weight 563.35 carats), reposes now in the American Museum of Natural History, New York City.

I was glad to be up in the air and light again out on

the marble platform. I walked close to the Taj and trying not to let anyone see me put my hand on its marble side; it had the gentle warmth of a living thing.

The American tourists began to stream away, many of them I thought in their hurried walk in and out had seen the Taj only through the lenses of their cameras. The Taj was being snapped from every angle, but now all were gone except a few Indian groups, unhurried like our family. Tai wanted to take my picture by the Taj; she had me sit on the top step of the entrance, the children in a row beside me. She snapped so quickly that Pramila was still climbing the step to get in the picture and my face was turned in stern American direction, getting the children in order; but it was sweet to be familiar in this lovely place. The children were gentle in their play. Down they went into the garden with their mothers and had a little lunch which Madhurani produced. They were like little birds with the sweet sound of childish voices.

We had gazed for more than an hour before the sun set. We viewed the gleaming, luminous, golden beauty from every angle. We looked at it close from the marble platform. We strolled slowly in the garden. We savored each minute.

At last the sun was gone, at last all the light was gone. It had fallen dark quickly, and now we left the Taj, gleaming white in the night, "the immortal Taj, a mirage of ethereal loveliness, which it seemed, might vanish at any minute."

Our station wagon was waiting outside and as we rattled back across the bridge into the center of Agra. Tai said, "I must call my cousin again." She had tried to ring him from the hotel at noon, but could not get through. She had explained then to me that her cousin was the central officer, the president, in one of the Agra banks. She hadn't seen him for years, but when he had gone to school in Nagpur she had known him well. Our driver found a phone for her in a booth in front of a gas station. Tai and Madhu went in; the children were restless now except Prabhavati and Sujata; they were

fast asleep in their mothers' arms. Tai came back smiling.

"Chitnis wants us to come. We haven't seen each other for six years. He is eager to have me and he has never seen Madhu's and Mukund's families."

So off we drove with our load of tired children to the cousin's house; it was in the "civil lines." It was dark and Mathura and our beds seemed a long way off. The cousin's porch light was on to guide us, but I stumbled some getting up the high steps amid the profusion of plants in pots. A pleasant Indian man greeted us warmly, insisting that Madhu dismiss the station wagon and that we spend the night with them. Tai laughingly said, "Count us. This is my whole family; Mrs. Armstrong is my Akka, so there are fourteen of us."

He laughed too saying, "This is Divali. It is the time for family visits. What does it matter where we sleep? Come, my wife wants to greet you too, and I want to hear all about your trip to the United States, Tai."

So in we went to a large house, with a central stairway, into a rather small living room with white plastered walls, the usual inset shelves and with Western style furniture. Tai and I sat down, Madhu, Mukund, and their families disappeared. I wondered what upheaval we had caused, but Tai, while we waited, placidly told me about her cousin. He had been a bright boy; upon his graduation from college he had gone into the Bank of India in Nagpur. He had married well; promotion had followed promotion till now he was the president of an Agra bank, living in this big house with his seven daughters. Just then the cousin came in smiling.

"There were a few arrangements to make. I did not tell you before because I was afraid you would not stay, but we have six other Divali guests. But more than that, I have a surprise for you. I have a son, born just three weeks ago today."

Tai now was congratulating him and wanting at once to see his wife. Proudly he led us across the hall into a dining room, a large room with a table at one side with nine chairs drawn up to it.

be there that would take us to the bus station. Mr. Chitnis said they were already waiting. We said warm good-byes. By the time the fourteen of us were stored in the two vehicles, Mr. Chitnis backed out from his grounds in his neat little Fiat. We waved at him, then I looked back at the house with its wide high steps, plants in pots thick at the sides of them, at the wide front verandah circling one side of the house, and at the upper railing of the roof terrace that covered the whole house. Tai as usual reading my mind said, "Oh, Akka, if only the weather had been warm. That is such a lovely roof terrace on which to sleep under the sky."

Mathura 3

THE BUS STATION WAS THROGGED and the children again enjoyed the crowded ride. Back in Mathura Mukund and Mandakini were to take the train early the next morning for Nagpur. There was a great packing up of their bedrolls with all their belongings and with the gifts that Tai had brought them from the United States. Just before the tonga and the two rickshaws came to take us to the station, Madhurani brought in a silver tray, on it a coconut, a nosegay and a parcel. Placing it on the floor before the shrine, Mukund and Mandakini came and stood before it, Madhu and Madhurani on the other side, their backs to their little god ensconced on the shelf; then both couples stood facing the god, Lord Krishna, chanting. Mandakini was beaming; there was a blouse piece for her in the parcel, and she enjoyed the honor of the farewell ceremony.

While we were in our bedroom getting moneybags, Tai said quietly to me, "I am so proud of Madhurani. She has carried on all this Divali celebration with every ceremony, carried almost all of it on her own shoulders. She is tired and worn but has not said one cross word."

As we rode to the railroad station I thought too about the Indian philosophy of marriage. An Indian woman never says her husband's name: Madhurani never let the word Madhu pass her lips; no calling by name, no open discussions. Tai had told me, "Affection can hurt far more than indifference. One often sees an adoring couple torturing each other unconsciously by word and deed and wearing down each other's patience with small drops of irritation." And I recalled, too, Tai's often repeated words about Indian marriage: "A married woman should remember that she is as responsible for her husband as for her son and, once she has accepted him, she must tolerate him as generously as if he were her son. Intolerance should come before marriage, not afterwards. Unmarried and married alike should never think that only their lot is hard; the unmarried do not escape from family and domestic responsibilities and the married also can be lonely. Happiness does not depend on one's state, married or unmarried, but comes from within a person."

Tai and I, back in our room, lay down to rest and read, our door open a crack so that I heard the boys' tutor when he opened the creaking metal front gate. He brought his bicycle into the front courtyard and came directly up onto the front verandah. Prakash and Kiran were squatting on a mat waiting for him.

"You have prepared your lessons?" he queried

"Yes," they chorused, "we studied this morning and again after our meal."

I could tell that the tutor was checking the problems he had left on their slates. Prakash's were perfect. Kiran had one mistake. I dozed off; when I rose I could hear the boys reading aloud in English. Prakash would read, then Kiran, then they read together, their voices a sing-song. Once in a while the tutor's voice cut in sharply, correcting them. The tutor was a small, thin man; his legs going up into his dhoti were just bones. He wore a Western coat over his shirt, the cuffs were frayed but it was the badge of a respectable occupation. Madhurani had told me he had a school post in the mornings,

but was glad to piece out his income by tutoring in the afternoon. Later, they would send the boys to school, but when they were living in the factory compound it was too much of a problem in transportation to get them to school. It had been cheaper and easier to have the tutor come to them and the boys were doing well with the individual instruction. Prakash, next July, would be ready for the fourth form Cambridge exams, and Kiran was almost up with him.

The tutor gone, Tai and I sat on the wicker chairs on the front verandah, shaded from the sun, when Prakash and Kiran, who had gone to the roof terrace to play, came running back through the house to us, their eyes wide, words tumbling out. "Ajil Ajil A man with a performing bear is walking up the road. Can't you hear his flute? He is piping his tune."

Tai at once got up saying, "Come, Akka, we will have him come into the back courtyard and have his bear dance for you. It will give you a chance to see one of our wandering performers and give the children a treat too."

Prakash and Kiran were out the gate in a flash, calling to the man, telling him to come around to the back courtyard. By the time Tai and I had carried our chairs through the house to the back verandah, the man and bear were coming in through the back gate and with them a troop of neighborhood children. I looked at Tai a little speculatively; the family children had never once gone out to play and children had never come in to play. The twin girls and the ten-year-old boy from the other half of the block who shared the roof terrace with us were the only children I had seen. But here were a dozen, all ages, and more coming.

Tai called out, "Leave the back gate open so that any neighborhood children who want to see the bear perform can come in." Madhurani had come, Surat still sleepily clinging to her sari, and the old woman servant with a wide toothless grin was carrying Prabhavati, who was hiding her sleepy head on her shoulder.

The man with the bear was the tallest Indian I had

cleaned it up for me. At any rate, the man had us in the palm of his hand, the children and I laughed at his will.

Now he led the bear up close to me for my approval. I asked Tai, "May I have something to feed him?" Under his heavy fur, the bear was thin as the man, his feet as travel worn. At once Madhurani brought me four chapattis. I held one out far in front of me. The bear snatched it, then jumped up on my lap. I was yelling and everyone was laughing. I had thrown my hands up with the chapattis, over my head, and the bear was trying to reach them. I threw them out into the courtyard and he was after them, gulping them down in single pieces and sniffing back at me for more.

The man picked up Kiran who drew up his legs and pulled back in fright, but the bear stood on all fours before the man as he put Kiran on his back and led him in a circle like a little pony. I had gone for my bag. Once I was back with it, the man was standing before me smiling, bowing.

"What shall I give?" I asked Tai.

"A rupee will set him mad with joy."

When I handed out the rupee the man smiling and bowing said, "More bakshish mem-sahib." I was in that hypnotic daze to which the good showman reduces you. Quickly, as Tai said, "No, Akka, no," I brought out another rupee and tossed it to him. He flung both rupees high in the air, catching them; he was wild with joy, but quickly he took the bear by his chain, walking swiftly away on his long thin legs, the bear with its clumsy shambling keeping up with him. The children followed close as if he was a piper. Outside, the notes of his pipe carried back to us; they wailed confidently.

Tai said, "Two rupees was twice too much, Akka, but all that man's life, as he tells tales around the camp-fire at night, he will recount the wonderful performance he gave for the mem-sahib and that she gave him two rupees."

Tai said it was time to go to the bazaar; Madhurani wanted to buy cloth for winter clothes for the children and she needed to go to the food market as well. Prakash and Kiran ran up the street the little distance to the rickshaw stand so that by the time we were out in the road the two brothers with their bicycle rickshaws were waiting for us. The older one of the two, the manager of the stand, was busy dusting off the seat of his rickshaw. Tai and I rode with him and he knew that Tai would not get in unless it was clean. His bicycle rickshaw was worn and old, the upholstery on the seat threadbare; Tai did not object to that, but she would not get in where there was *dust or dirt*.

The rickshaw wallah was confidential with Tai telling her what a hard and meager life he lived. He and his brother had worked hard to pay off the debt on their rickshaws and now they were almost worn out, both machines and men. There was constant expense on the bicycles, and soon they would have to pay for new upholstery. Just now with all our trips they were doing well, but most of the time there was not much going except for festivals, and during the rainy season business was dead. It was a hard life; rickshaw drivers were all right when they were young, but as they grew older, their legs gave out, and they had no other trade to turn to in their old age, and it was hard on the lungs too. The exertion of pedaling a heavy load brought on tuberculosis. "Oh, it is a hard life," he would sigh. "But what can a man do but follow his trade?" He spoke in Hindi so I could not understand him, but Tai would tell me his complaints and he would cast glances at me with his worn, dark eyes. Tai had open communication with lower caste people; she demanded cleanliness and good service, but she was sympathetic and often able to advise them and help them.

Rickshaw hire was on both a trip and a time basis. It was fourteen annas to the bazaar and back but if we kept the man waiting for us, which we always did, it was two extra annas per hour. Madhu settled once a week for our rickshaw fares; it was not only common practice

for the man of the house to pay the bills, but also it kept the rickshaw driver from running up the rates because an American was in the party. The understanding was that when I left Mathura, I would give the rickshaw wallah generous bakshish. Even without this honus from me, he was doing well, we made so many trips.

Tai and I climbed in, Prakash and Kiran climbing in after us as was their custom. Nomads were camping by the roadside. Tai said it looked as if they intended to spend the winter there. In a holy city they would not be persecuted and driven away as they would in a more modern place. But the camel carts were gone. They had just come in to haul pilgrims for Govardhan Fair. Tai said they might move on to some other fair or they might go back, each to his village, where they would do general hauling, crops to market as well as people going in to a larger city. The dusty road was full of traffic, rickshaws and tongas, people on foot; these were low caste, evidenced by their grimy saris and dhotis. Many of the men wore for a dhoti just a scrap of red cloth, so brief it looked almost like a diaper. In the warmer weather, they would wear nothing else, Tai said, but now they wore ragged shirts. All of them were thin, just bones, no flesh, and the skin drawn over their bones was dark. A few old men wore padded jackets, tight short garments, buttoned over their chests with three-quarter sleeves. Few were barefooted; in this kind of winter weather their feet were thrust into straw or wooden sandals, a few wore leather, but many of the devout in this holy city wouldn't wear leather of any kind.

Just before we came to the outdoor food market there was a row of charpoys; squatted on them among tumbles of cloth were merchants, these men wearing caps and turbans and bushy mustaches. I hadn't seen them there before and the tumbles of cloth were not saris but long lengths of yard goods. Back of them in the shops, tumble-down brick buildings with double open doors, there were piles of comforters and huge mounds of white cotton and men working.

"This is a quilt market," Tai said. "Nights are cold now, and people must have covers for warmth. They use cotton tops filled with cotton. Some people will buy new comforters, some will have their old tops washed and new cotton put in, and some will have old cotton in new tops. Madhu and Madhurani have ordered one new comforter and they have ordered a good top that they already have to be filled with new cotton. On our way home, we will stop to get them."

The men were staring at me and I was staring back. They didn't look quite like the other Indians about and, too, I was staring at a parrot, squawking in a cage high over their heads. Tai wanted to buy a parrot for the children but she said when I asked if we could get that one, "No, that one will be their pet; they never will sell it."

Cows, as usual, were gathered about the food market; the old women were guarding their trays with long poles and hurling insults and poking the persistent cows away. Men standing there to buy were speaking softly to the cows and giving them consoling pats.

Once in the main part of the bazaar, the street was still more crowded. Divali sales and the holiday spirit were over, but nippy cold mornings would come and everyone was out getting supplies for winter. Many of the men had Western wool coats over their shirts, the tails hanging out over long dhotis or pajamas—a few wore Western wool trousers too, and some women had on wool shawls; the others had their palus thrown about their shoulders and over their heads like shawls. Just inside the bazaar gate, on racks out in the street, there was a big display of leather sandals and a few oxfords. These were not the gold-stamped sandals from Jaipur or Benares; they were plain leather, sturdy everyday wear for cold weather. On the other side there were some shoeshops, narrow stalls one could walk into; the oxfords and loafers on the shelves were in sizes in boxes and there was a chair to sit on while being fitted.

As we passed the numerous photo finishing places, Tai stopped at the Bharat Studios to see if our films and

prints were ready. They had been promised long ago, but the man coming outside with her said, "Tomorrow I will deliver them to you in person." Tai lectured him and wrote out the address.

"Tomorrow," she said, "always you say tomorrow."

As we waited outside the photo shop, the shrill skirl of bagpipes had sounded and the rhythm of drums. The crowd in the street parted, making way for a procession. There were six men playing bagpipes, two men playing drums, all of them in red and blue uniforms; their music was lively. Just behind them walked a group of five older Indian men in spotless long white dhotis, and thin white embroidered shirts, long sleeves falling half over their hands, long shirttails hanging out over the full folds of their dhotis. They were laughing and talking to one another. Following them were six younger men also in spotless white, walking two abreast, carrying on their shoulders a rope net spread on a bamboo frame making a long, narrow box heaped full of marigolds. The young men, too, were talking, laughing, and lightly jostling the netted box keeping the bright orange marigolds in a constant flutter.

The photo proprietor standing by us explained, "That is a funeral procession bearing the body of a very old man, eighty years, I believe. He has died within the hour and they are carrying his body through the bazaar in triumphal procession. The men are his sons and grandsons rejoicing that their father had such a long and successful life."

Our rickshaws took us on to the cloth bazaar. Madhurani bought first from one of the corner merchants just as we went in. Tai explained, "This is one of the best shops for yard goods." Madhurani stood close by as the merchant tossed bolts open for her to see the material. In moments, the floor of his large booth was hallowing with yards of cloth. Swiftly, Madhurani selected a length of part cotton, part wool material in a clear sky blue for winter shirts for Madhu. Then she had the merchant cut off a number of yards of brick red with a small design in blue, a material somewhat like our

outing flannel. This was to make warm morning house-coats for Prabhavati and Satish. "No need to buy warmer clothes for Prakash and Kiran. They wear their parkas all day and all night." As she spoke, the two boys moved their heads and pulled them a little farther down into the warm collars; both of them had their parkas on and zipped up tight.

Madhurani was finishing when she asked to see a piece of material almost hidden under other bolts. The merchant, working with lightning speed, pulled out the bolt, letting yards of the material spill out. It was a warm beige, spotted with brown like a leopard skin. Madhurani turned to us smiling, "I will get a dress for Surat." Surat's sweet face changed from its impassive beauty to smiles. She stood there warm in the sweater, coat length, her grandmother had brought from Delhi.

The cloth had just scraps of paper put around it as Madhurani handed over the rupees, but she stored it in the cloth bag she was carrying on her arm.

We let ourselves be swept along with the crowd as we went through the half-circle of shops, pushing as close to the stalls as we could to see the saris, most of them quite dark material. Many people were buying. Tai explained, "Before Divali, people were buying silk saris and blouse lengths for gifts and for festival wear. These saris being shown now are dark, heavy ones for practical winter wear." Madhurani stopped, our tight little group halting with her. Her eyes had caught sight of a navy blue cotton sari, tied and dyed, the design in red with bits of orange and yellow. It was handwoven and of course dyed by hand too; Tai explained to me that they used grains to tie in for the small dots and even-sized pebbles for the larger dots. Madhurani had gift money to spend on saris from her brothers so she promptly bought it, paying ten rupees for it, about two dollars in our value, saying "Aunti, even we have to look nowadays to find handmade material, so much that is offered is mill woven. The colors are so much nicer and there is so much more wear in the handwoven, hand-dyed saris."

We had to complete the half-circle of stalls to reach the exit but we did no more buying and did not loiter. Madhurani had spent only a small part of her gift money, but she had taken care of the immediate needs of the family, there was no storing up of clothes for the children or of everyday saris for herself. Outside one of the rickshaw wallahs was standing, waiting for us. He went at once for his brother, who was with the rickshaws parked at a place down the street where it was not so busy. As we waited for them, Madhurani went across the street, all of us with her, and bought bone buttons for Madhu's shirts and hooks and eyes for the little girls' garments. This little stall seemed full of oddments, there was even enamelware, some basins and a bedpan on the narrow shelves.

Back in the rickshaws, we moved along slowly because of the crowds, with only glimpses of the stalls. There was still a full festoon of masks over the street above the shops that sold flutes and drums and cymbals. The big masks were moving a little in the breeze, the bright red devil faces and the obscene pig snouts seemed almost alive. I asked if there would be a sale of the masks now that the festival was over, Tai said, "No one will buy masks until there is another festival. They will take them down tomorrow." We passed the group of stalls that sold brass and copper. They were hung just as full with pots and pans as they had been before Divali when everyone was pushing around them buying. Now they didn't have a single customer and the merchants were squatted in the front of their booths, visiting, calling back and forth to one another.

Ahead of us the street widened as one part of it wandered on in the bazaar shops, the other part went down to the street beside the river. In this wider angle, a group of people were standing in a circle; we could see nothing but we could hear a peculiar high wail on a flute. I turned to Tai hopefully. "A snake charmer?" I asked.

"Akka, we'll get out. I think it is." There had been news and a picture in the *Times of India* of the good

haul of cobras made along the banks of the Jumna during the recent flood. The picture had shown thin-legged, turbaned Indians with sticks and cloth bags that looked squirmingly full. Tai told me that we would see a snake charmer sometimes but that there was one month, in the spring, when it was most auspicious for the snake charmers. Then the towns would be full of them. She went on to say that the worship of snakes still survives everywhere in India, and at Nagpur, a city of half a million, snakes were a danger until very recently. The place names of India were full of snakes too; Naga, the word for snake, was the parent of Nagpur, and also of our present address 3 C Krishna Nagar.

Once we were out of the rickshaws, our little group was conspicuous because of my Western clothes and the crowd of Hindus opened a view for us. On the old stones of the bazaar squatted a thin, turbaned man playing an instrument made of a gourd with a projection like a flute. The sweet, thin wail of the music was flutelike but eerie. In front of him there was a round basket of coiled reeds, a cloth thrown lightly over it. Evidently the snake charmer had been playing his prelude; the crowd was hushed, waiting. Suddenly he pulled off the cloth, bent low over the coiled round basket with his gourd and reed. In rhythm with the music, the cobra raised his hooded head from his own cold coils. Up, up the charmer raised his instrument, the awful hooded head rising with it. It seemed two feet in the air and still we could see snake coils in the basket. There was no break in rhythm by the charmer or the snake. Once the cobra's head was up, the charmer swayed from side to side, the heavy hood, the sinuous body swaying with the music. Clear to the side, then in the full half-circle to the other side the cobra swayed; it was a slow dancing in tune with the high-pitched music. On and on it went, the crowd silent, motionless, until suddenly the snake charmer dropped his flute, the cobra fell back into the basket, and, in that instant, the man threw out on the ground a half-dozen scorpions; the crowd standing close and rapt, drew back with cries of fear as the dread scorpions scuttled about on the stones. We too fell back

and began climbing into our rickshaws. "Bakshish, bakshish," the snake charmer was shrieking and running full at us, a small brown viper like a dagger in his hand. In the instant of confusion, Tai had a rupee out, handing it to the rickshaw wallah who was in front of us. He threw it to the snake charmer and in the instant was on his bicycle and we were off, the snake charmer still calling "Bakshish" after us in an angry voice. My arms were tight around Kiran; he was trembling. Prakash was shivering too.

We rattled rapidly over the old stones till we came to the food market. Outside there were carts with oranges and bananas. Flies were thick on the blackened bananas. In a matter of weeks, papayas would be for sale, but Tai longed for mangos to be in season; she wanted them for herself, she had missed them in the United States, and she wanted me to taste them.

We had to get out of the rickshaws to go into the food market. We entered through crude turnstiles, I supposed to keep cows out, but there were many cows inside that had squeezed in some way. The cows were pushing up to the stalls, contending with the customers, most of whom were men holding a bicycle with one hand, a cloth bag clutched in it too, with the other hand feeling the vegetables, making selection, and often giving a cow a slap on her rump to move her out of the way. These slaps were so gentle, the cows would switch their tails and turn their heads proudly; they recognized their position of honor. Tai explained that these were business men and professional men on their way home; it was now past five o'clock. In old days, servants did the shopping, but now that servants were scarce and expensive, the man of the house, with the easy transportation of his bicycle, stopped on his way home for the daily shopping for vegetables and fruits. There was no cool storage in the homes, so perishable supplies were bought daily. Some of the men looked cross and abused, but many of them were gossiping together and calling out to one another, and gaily slapping the cows' rumps as if it was a holy act.

There were both men and women selling in these

stalls; they had high piles of eggplants, onions, carrots, white potatoes, sweet potatoes, and cauliflower on round reed trays. There was a great variety of greens like spinach for sale. Madhurani had several cloth bags bulging full, on top she put two bananas. They had cost eight annas, half a rupee, and all the other vegetables had cost only a rupee. In our money value she had spent a dollar and a half for the vegetables for one day. A large amount for Indian budgets.

Out on the street, dusk had begun, a few kerosene flares were lighted, the traffic was heavy, little street girls had their small reed trays and were snatching up the droppings from the cows almost before they fell on the paving stones; then the girls would scurry away, already shaping the dung into fuel cakes for drying. Women sweepers were working. Twice a day with their short little brooms, they swept the streets clear of litter. Music was blaring up the street, bagpipes and drums. Our rickshaw wallahs waited for them to pass us. It was not a holy procession, as I had hoped, but just a couple of Indians carrying big movie posters pasted on boards, two men with them squawking and squealing away on bagpipes to the thump of another man with a drum.

Madhurani called out to me, "Oh, Aunti, I want to take you to the cinema while you are here. The plays are so good. We will have to plan to go early; there are such crowds that if you are a little late, you can't get in. See the cinema house is just up the street. The crowds are pouring in and the picture doesn't begin until seven."

Our men had started peddling their bicycles so we were moving along in the crowd. The crowd was turning in to a large flat-fronted building, papered with big gaudy posters, lit with a few dim electric bulbs. The face of an Indian movie actress twice life size looked serenely out from large oval eyes under heavily lined brows, her full lips scarlet. Below her was the hero looking up as if a goddess had appeared, his eyes wondering, his lips half-parted to call to her. Up in the corner, in Hindi, was the name of the picture. The front of the

building was covered with the big posters, the repetition of the faces, while they attracted the crowds, by their very repetition made a design.

Our rickshaw wallahs had to steer our rickshaws skillfully to keep us from being swept into the cinema along with the crowd. Just beyond we did turn into the Frontier Medical Hall. In front there was a vacant place. The men were glad to rest their legs while we went inside. This was a drugstore. While the word frontier was one the British used in India, the building that housed the drugstore was like American frontier shacks, a rickety porch, a window on each side of a door; the front of the building built up to make an impression of size, the name Frontier Medical Hall painted on a banner nailed to this false upper front.

Inside one electric bulb dangled from a cord, feebly lighting the fly-bespecked merchandise on the makeshift shelves. Most of the goods were British but with brand names common to the United States. There was Johnson's Baby Powder, Ponds creams, Colgate toothpaste, Lux flakes and soap and Gillette razors. There was Tiger Balm ointment from Hong Kong and there were various bottles of coconut and sandalwood hair oil, and there was a selection of fly sprays, bottles, spray cans beside them.

One shelf was filled with white enamelware, basins, bedpans, slop jars, and beside these, packages of Johnson and Johnson bandages. Just in front, there was a glass case filled with antibiotics—Lilly, Merck, Ciba—the brand names on them were familiar. There was a tremendous supply of them, and their small boxes were bright and clean behind the glass. Madhurani was asking for Kraft cheese. The merchant led her to the back shelves. They were stocked with food, canned fruit from the Mathura Company, Kraft cheese from Australia, butter from New Zealand, ham from Denmark, biscuits from England, and Heinz tomato soup also from England, all of them in tins. Madhurani bought cheese and soup paying three rupees for them, twice as much for my supplies as for the whole family's food. The merchant

was urging more but Madhurani was buying for me in small quantity just as she bought their own supplies.

In the rickshaws again, we turned back toward the main gate of the bazaar, but just on the other side of the cinema house Madhurani halted us in front of a little stall serving tea and chapattis. She didn't get out of the rickshaw, but the driver wheeled her close and an Indian came out and they engaged in earnest conversation, then he went inside. "Aunti," she called, "this is where Madhu comes to buy your eggs. Today the man can let me have two."

The man came out walking as proudly as if he had laid the eggs himself, put them in on top of the green vegetables in the cloth bag the rickshaw wallah held open, and accepted eight annas (another half rupee, fifty cents for two eggs in our money value). I exclaimed over the cost but Tai was saying, "Alka, you must have eggs for your basic diet. Madhu is very lucky that they will sell to him. This is the only place in Mathura that they have eggs. Mathura people are so holy that they will not eat them and so destroy the germ in an egg. Pilgrims who are not so strict buy at this little restaurant."

Just as we passed the old entrance to the bazaar, a procession came out, headed as usual by bagpipes and drums, this time followed by a group of men wearing billowing white dhotis and long silk coats buttoned to the neck. Behind them came a big gray horse with silver trappings, riding on it a young man in turban and brocade jacket, his legs in silk Nehru jodhpurs. Servants walked on each side carrying kerosene torches. It was almost dark and the flares lighted the harried, embarrassed face of the young man on the horse. Tai explained that he was a bridegroom in procession through the bazaar.

We were out now from the bazaar on the wider street, but even in this half-dark it was still crowded. We couldn't see the dust, but we could feel it on our faces, in our eyes, and taste it in our mouths. Our rickshaw wallahs whirled us along as fast as they could. We could see little in the shadows but when we passed the

nomads' camping place, we could see small fires under their cooking pots, making glow enough to light the dark faces of the nomad women squatting over them, waiting for the food to cook.

When we reached our block, Madhu had already arrived, changed his Western clothes for a clean white shirt and white pajamas, and was sitting on the verandah reading the daily paper, the *Times of India*. He had brought a children's magazine in English for the boys. Prakash and Kiran squatted down on the mat beside him, together looking at the pages. Tai took Prabhavati from the old woman's arms. Prabhavati so bright-eyed and eager for her grandmother still turned her head away from my white face. The old woman began to wash vegetables at the tap as Madhurani lighted her charcoal braziers and pumped up her oil burner. She put rice on in one pot, dahl in the other. By this time the old woman brought the vegetables clean and Madhurani cut them up on her board, the knife pressing down until the onions, potatoes, and spinach were small pieces. Peanut oil was hot in the copper pan as Madhurani threw in a couple of teaspoonfuls of mustard seed and other spices for her masalla, then put on the cover till it popped. At just the right moment, she took off the cover, put in the vegetables, tossing them about until they were coated with oil, adding salt, cinnamon, turmeric and red pepper, then covered the pot tight to steam. Now Madhurani lighted another fire pot to warm the chapattis that she had saved from the morning meal. As a rule they were made fresh, but because of our trip to the bazaar she had made additional chapattis ahead of time. Madhurani squatted by her pots, her motions unhurried but in a very short time she sent the old woman to the roof to get the children; there was never any calling back and forth.

The children came at once, first going to the tap to wash with their father, then gathering with their mother as she lighted the incense sticks in the silver holder before the little silver figure of Lord Krishna. All of them made deep namastes to Lord Krishna then together sang

a veda. Then at once the children came by, Prakash first, making a deep namaste, their little arms stretched high over their heads, then bending low with their heads and arms, first to me, then to Tai, then to Madhu and last to Madhurani. They touched our feet, a sign of utmost respect. Madhu then made a deep namaste to us. Madhurani followed him, also bowing low before us, both of them touching our feet. Low clouds of incense swirled around the room. An electric bulb high on the wall lighted the scene, but in the little adjoining kitchen there was only the light of the fire pots.

The children squatted on the mats, Tai sitting with them, Prakash beside her on a small mat, Kiran, Sujata, and Surat on the larger mat; a thal, a tumbler, and a lota with water was in front of Tai and each child, each thal freshly rinsed by Madhurani with water. Madhurani was now serving them with smooth motions, putting mounds of rice in the center of the thals, the various foods about the edge, and two chapattis on each thal. Then she brought my plate as I sat on the trunk, the little table with its cloth before me. I had rice, a bit of the vegetable—Tai would not let me have much because it was seasoned hot—a spoonful of dahl was put on my rice, there was a good wedge of cheese, and Madhurani had found time to fry the two bananas for me.

There was no conversation. Madhurani squatted against the wall, she had taken Prabhavati from Tai and Prabhavati was nursing under the curtain of the palu of her sari. Madhurani, holding Prabhavati in one arm was serving, giving more food when the first she put out was eaten. Tai held her hand over her plate in a half-cupped gesture to indicate when she did not want more. The children made the same gesture. They sat cross-legged in the soft light, relaxed, eating as much or as little as they chose. Once all had put up their hands in the gesture of refusal, a mound of rice was put in the center of each thal, then a generous amount of curd was poured on. All the little hands followed Tai's dainty movements as she mixed the curd in with her right hand, then ate it. Not once during the meal had a left

hand been used. The dahl, a chick pea cooked into a gravy, had been mixed with the first serving of rice so none of the food was runny but all the food had been carried to their mouths with their fingers without muss or fuss, and neither their faces nor their fingers were dirty.

Just as the meal was finished, a dog appeared in the doorway, growling, coming a little way into the room. Instantly Madhu moved and drove it out. He shut the courtyard door with a loud bang.

Knowing my feeling for dogs Tai came and sat beside me, saying in a low voice, "Akka, you must realize our problems. We cannot allow dogs from the street to come into our courtyards. We have many mad dogs, and then dogs are not content to eat from the garbage pit, they creep into the kitchen. I did not tell you that yesterday this dog came in and tipped over the milk can. We must be rid of it. Akka, there are things you never understand. It is a choice here of our children or animals. Come, let us go to the roof with the children."

Madhurani would come to the roof too as soon as she finished her meal. The old woman then would squat on the back verandah and eat. The thals and cooking pots would be put outside the kitchen door for the old woman to take to the tap and scrub clean with ashes.

Madhurani came. It was dark now and stars were beginning to shine in the sky. They seemed bright and close to us. Tai said, "Madhurani, will you sing for us?" Tai sat beside me on the mat, the children squatted, clustered around their mother. Tai said the name Madhurani with such liquid tones I thought always of the Indian instruction about the names of women. "The names of women should be soft, clear, and captivating, ending in long vowels like words of benediction." Madhurani's name was just this and when she began to sing her voice too was soft and clear and captivating. I couldn't understand the Hindi words but there were many long vowel sounds. The notes were quarter-tones, starting high and clear; then there was a trill of the notes near, a running up and down of the musical scale,

a few notes down, more notes up in a birdlike warble, soft in tone but coming back clear and serene to the high note. Then down, trying a lower depth, going from high to low, note by note, a musical play about it. The song ended with a high return, a long, sustained, clear singing of a quarter-tone. It was a triumphant return, having tried surrounding notes, having explored the lower notes, a return to a single sound, vibrating, pulsing, a sweet wailing with the penetration of the tones from a flute. The song was like the sweet wail of a child for its mother.

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Up on the roof, there was still a little light; the sky was like a big deep-blue bowl coming close down over our heads. The openwork of the whitewashed cement railings marked the edges of the roof clearly. Tai lined Prakash, Kiran and Satish up; Surat standing with them too, while Tai led them in a song, a Maharashtrian warrior song, the melody accented with the motion of drawing, presenting and thrusting about with an imaginary sword. The boys' voices shrilled out clearly; they knew the words well. Satish followed the movements, Tai helping and encouraging her. I thought of how long ago top Indian women performed deeds of valor and how even today a little girl was being trained.

Once this classical song was over, Madhurani began to sing ballads sweet and clear. The children were silent, motionless. Tai would say, "Madhurani, sing this," and Madhurani would reply, "Can I remember?" On and on she sang for an hour. Then with one motion all of us were up and moving downstairs. Madhurani intending to wait for Madhu to come home from his night shift of work, sat cross-legged, her back against a wall, holding the chunky little boy. Madhurani, serene after her long day's work, said, "Surat still feels the need to be physically close to his mother. He naps all afternoon so that he will be fresh to enjoy the evening when he can have my arms without competition from

Prabhavati. Oh, Surat manages his life well for comfort and enjoyment."

In our room, I looked at my watch. It was just a quarter of nine. There seemed to be no pressure of a schedule in the household—the children went to bed when they pleased and got up when they pleased. They played and studied according to their own wishes, but there was a steady rhythm in the household which was not disturbed by an individual's free action. Tai had our light off, but I lay watching the beams from the street lamp on the post outside the wall and thinking of Madhurani saying, "Aunti, I never say no to the children about anything. I only discipline a child when it does something against another child. Then I take the child alone and talk to it."

There wasn't a sound in the night. It was as peaceful as this Indian household, and the fragrance of the incense burned at evening worship still drifted in the silent air.

Mathura 4

AFTER MUCH INDECISION, Tai decided to accept the post offered by the Ford Foundation in Kathmandu, Nepal, as Indian Advisor to the home economics school. In several letters Kamlabai had urged her to do so, telling of the need and challenge. She would leave for Nepal after my departure for the United States.

The days were slipping by, each full of family life and spiced for me with trips to buy saris from the cloth bazaar for myself and for gifts on my return. Once more Prakash and Kiran ran for the rickshaw and we set off. As we rode along the dusty roadway, I looked fondly at the strange but now familiar scene. Tai said again, "Oh, Alka, you would like Mathura, one of the oldest, dirtiest and stinkiest cities in India." I didn't answer but lost my thoughts in the small ruined temples, in the eroded hills showing shards of civilization that had vanished thousands of years ago.

Tai brought me back with a sharp exclamation "See, Alka, there is a peacock. Oh, there are two of them." Tai had told me that peacocks were one of the sights of

religion today there is no educational requirement to be a holy man. Our people have no real belief that they are holy men. They are fed from pity or from superstition." Tai seldom spoke of the Hindu religion, partly I thought because its practice was so much a part of the fabric of everyday life that she saw nothing to tell, but it was partly too because the pantheon of gods was so complex that she didn't want to get my curious mind involved in it.

Our first stop was to make our last visit to the Mathura museum. Civilization was so old in Mathura that it was not surprising that there were so many cultural remains. Indeed Mathura was reported to have one of the largest and best archaeological collections in India.

The Mathura museum was in a park in the center of town, not far from the bazaar. We turned in to the red sandstone building through an aisle of tidy trees.

The building was one-storied, spread out into large halls. We entered to find ourselves surrounded, overpowered with larger than life-size stone figures, many of them hundreds of years B.C. By the dates on the carvings, culture seemed to be at its height in Mathura from the second to the fifth centuries with some images created as early as nine hundred B.C. Prakash, Kiran, Tai, and I wandered about. The boys asked no questions, but Tai was explaining the various gods and goddesses. I loitered behind them taking delight in the voluptuous figures. The bosoms were so full and round, the waists so small, the hips provocative, but the faces all had a dreamlike sweetness, a softness of lip, a gentleness of almond eyes even in the stone. The gods were so pure and strong in their virility, it must have been a wonderful age when they were carved.

We had circled around to the front entrance when in came, with a whirl and flashing of red skirts, a band of about twenty Marwari women. They pulled their half-saris closer about their faces at sight of us and stayed in a loose group, moving slowly along, looking at the sacred images. Their arms were heavy with silver

bracelets. About their necks there were silver chains, and below their twenty-yard-wide skirts, their ankles were ringed with silver over their bare feet.

As we left, an attendant asked us to sign the guest register. I wondered if the Marwari women could sign their names or if they would go as they came, laughing with a swirl of their red skirts.

The rickshaw driver took us on to the bazaar. Most of my gifts had been shipped home in cloth bags whipped shut with tiny stitches, but I needed a box. The box shop was just inside the bazaar in a row of stalls occupied by artisans. Tai would not let me get out of the rickshaw; she held her hands up, her forefingers measured the size of the box. I didn't see how the box could turn out the right size with such casual instructions but it did.

We made a stop at the Government Khadi Shop. The two men in charge there did not smile in welcome. There was not the spice of bargaining because prices were set by the government, but each of them would give a quick jerk to his head and move his old cronies, squatting and gossiping, out of the way so that they could spread their wares for me on the little platform at the end of the narrow shop. They had sold me green-blue wool from Kashmir for a three-piece suit.

Against Tai's protests, I now bought for her two khadi saris for winter wear in Nepal. Khadi was special to Tai for it was a symbol of Gandhiji. They were white, handblocked with small flower sprays. I bought a length of silk, a dhoi, pomegranate in color. Only in an old and holy city like Mathura could you find this reddish handwoven dhoi worn on festival days by old men. I bought fourteen yards of heavy striped material, cotton warp and silk woof in blue and brown. This was the material used by Moslem men for trousers; their faith did not permit the use of all silk. I asked Tai how they expected to sell this material in Hindu Mathura; she did not answer.

Tai had not been feeling well so we were going to Dr. Aurora. Madhu had inquired from Kashi about

doctors. Dr. Aurora was the leading physician in Mathura; he was their family's doctor and Kashi said that he was reliable and good. We had seen the big cloth banner over a cubicle before as we had ridden through the bazaar. It was at one of the many sharp turns in the old stone-paved narrow road.

Our driver let us out as there was no place near to park. He kept Prakash and Kiran in the rickshaw with him. In front of the doctor's office there was a tonga, with shiny paint and a well groomed horse. A bamboo blind hung down over the wide front opening, leaving a narrow space for us to squeeze into the tiny room. We had to climb over a bench filled with people that was directly in line with the doorway. On the back wall there was a desk, in front of it another long bench also filled with patients. Around the walls there were cupboards filled with bottles, books and papers, thick with dust. The cases did not go to the ceiling and on top of them there were pigeons roosting. The confusion of our being seated stirred the pigeons and they flapped over people's heads and out the narrow door but almost at once flew back in and settled down on top of the cupboards to bill and coo. They settled down over a cardboard sign stuck in the shelves that said "Consult your doctor for family planning." I thought of the Brahmin belief that it is good to have pigeons in a sick room; the beating of their wings as they come and go purifies the air.

Dr. Aurora was a little fat man, his head, his body, his hands, his feet all were round. He wore a Western suit, both trousers and jacket. And like American doctors he had a stethoscope hanging round his neck. His skin had the oily look of plenty of ghee and a lot of white showed at the ends of his eyes; the pupils had a sharp, black look. The doctor was sitting in the chair back of his desk, an erect man in Western coat and long white spotless dhoti sat in the chair beside him, undoubtedly the owner of the tonga outside.

The patient spoke in a low voice, but Dr. Aurora's voice was loud and clear. The waiting patients on the

benches were paying as close attention as if they were at a movie. All of them were men, well-dressed, with a scattering of children, but over by the door was a woman in a grimy poor sari, the palm close over her head, her face drawn with fear, her eyes down on a bundle of rags covering a year-old baby she held in her arms. Beside her was a man, his face anguished, his shirt ragged and dhoti dirty.

The consultation was finished and Dr. Aurora escorted his prominent patient to the door. Having seen him off he stopped, looked at the child, pulling the ragged covering aside then shaking his head he spoke emphatically to the parents. The poor man's face froze in fear and tears began to run silently from the woman's eyes. Dr. Aurora came back to his desk, turned his chair in our direction and addressed himself to us. Tai introduced me, then herself, told Dr. Aurora at once that my husband had been a physician, then launched into an account of her operation and her treatment in the United States, and her failure to hold her own since her return to India. Dr. Aurora called, and from a tiny room at the side a big Indian in a smock came and went out the door.

"I have to send my assistant for a shot for you, Mrs. Sathe, the Medical Hall is quite near."

We chatted for a minute about medicine in the United States, then I asked with my American bluntness, "What is the matter with the baby?"

He looked boldly at me and said, "Madam, the baby has diphtheria. It will die if it does not have antitoxin. I have told the parents to get the money." He went idly chatting on. "I give a hundred shots a day. How many did your husband average?" I looked over at the poor couple bent hopelessly over the child and said trying to keep my voice even, "My husband didn't give so many as that. He felt that it was too easy to overdo the use of antibiotics but he always gave when it was needed."

The doctor's eyes had followed my glance to the sick child. He said, "The parents are just trying for a free shot. They can raise the money if they are put to it."

Just then the assistant returned with Tai's medicine and she followed Dr. Aurora into the room at the side. I could see when the door opened that it was only about four by eight feet with a narrow examining table tight against the wall. The young couple got up and left, the eyes of all the waiting men following them, the ones with children drawing them close. Tai came out in a few minutes, Dr. Aurora seeing us to the door and the pigeons flying out again, this time over our heads. Our driver swaggering a little—he was proud to take us to Dr. Aurora's—got our rickshaw at once. The boys were sitting quietly in it.

"How was it, Tai?" I said.

"His hand is easy like my brother-in-law doctor," she said.

Then "Tai," I said, "my husband never let a patient leave his office without a shot if he needed it."

"Akka, we cannot judge one circumstance by another. If Dr. Aurora gave shots without the money, his office would be flooded; there are thousands in this town who need medication."

We had one more stop to make, at the Bank of India; I had to cash traveler's checks. Our driver pulled into the brick courtyard before the bank. Standing there were two soldiers, rifles at the ready. The front of the bank was a long, narrow roofed verandah, up two steep steps. Back of it there were at least twenty wickets, a row of Indian men busy at every wicket. As we stood a moment, hesitating, not knowing where to go, I read the rules of the bank posted on the walls at the side. The interest rates were given when gold and silver jewelry was used as collateral, but the item that interested me most was, "No woman in purdah [veiled] can open an account in the Bank of India."

Tai said, "Come, Akka," and we pushed past the men and went through an opening at the end of the wickets. We found ourselves in an inner square with several desks. At once one of the clerks got up and asked our business. "You will have to see the agent [the president] and show him your signature." He led us into

an enormously large room at the side with an enormously large desk, back of it a sharp looking Indian man in Western dress. As we entered an enormous black German shepherd dog got up and came toward us. Tai stopped short and drew her breath in as I laid my hand on the dog's head. He went back and lay down by the desk and we were seated on chairs in front of it.

The agent was pleasant, but brief. He had me sign my name, then compared it with the signatures on my traveler's checks. "Cash them," he said to the clerk and we went back to the other room where chairs were pulled out for us, I countersigned the checks, then waited as an old man with red sash and belt, a messenger, took them and went away. At last he came back, not with my money, but with a numbered disk. We would have to go to the pay-out window to get the cash. This involved going outside on the verandah and in an opening at the other end. Here there was another row of wickets, Indian men in front of each one of them, back of them Indian clerks on high stools, each with pen, ink, and ledger. There was not a typewriter, not an adding machine there—all the bookkeeping was done in longhand.

The pay-out wicket was the last one; over it there was a sign "Beware of pickpockets." The man took my disk, took my traveler's checks and counted them over, figuring as he did so on a paper. He gave his head a quick shake as he handed the money to me in rupee notes. I zippered it quickly into my shoulder bag.

We wheeled through the noise and confusion of the bazaar, out onto the road. I looked ahead as we came to the nomad camp to see as much of them as possible. Tai had small patience with my interest in the little camp. There were three flat wagons in the nomad group, the bullocks staked near them. The bullock carts were lifted up so that the floor made a little roof over low charpoys sitting underneath on the ground. Under one of the carts instead of a charpoy, there was a good stout English, low four-poster bed. There were no curtains, no bedding.

I liked seeing this bit of life, the men lounging about, the women stooping over their cooking pots, but I didn't like the chasing that two young girls from the group gave us every time we passed. Their bare feet would thud down the road after us as they called "Bakshish." They wore long, full skirts, their black hair in heavy braids, and they had the wild look of gypsies. This late afternoon our driver's legs must have been weary and slow because the nomad girls caught up with our rickshaw. At first they just hung on to the back of the seat calling "Bakshish" in loud voices. When we did not give, one of them caught the tail of my suitcoat and gave it a tug. I turned back and slapped her hand hard. Confusion broke forth, Tai's voice rising above it calling "Chalo, chalo [Make haste, get going]" to our driver. He rose up, standing on the pedals, fairly running with them. The girls dropped back a little as two of the men got up and started toward the road. The girls were hurling curses at us.

Our driver was going so fast he raised a cloud of dust that hid them as Tai turned on me, "Alka, you are a fool. Will you never learn? You will get us in serious trouble one of these days."

2

The day had come too soon, when I had to pack my bag for my return home to the United States. Tai was going with me to New Delhi the following day on the first stage of my journey. All my belongings except for the few toilet articles on the shelves were kept in my suitcases. There were no closets and no chests of drawers to empty. It was hard on my suits and dresses to be folded in tight quarters, but it was an easy and good arrangement for Tai's saris. The several metal trunks in the main room took care of the family clothes except for Madhu's Western coat; that he either wore or

hung on one of the hooks in the main room. And shoe storage for them was no problem either; they were left in neat rows at the door of the big room. No one wore shoes into the house.

As my hands followed the familiar routine of sorting and folding, my mind wandered. Ever since we had arrived at 3 C Krishna Nagar, I had watched the other family in the block with interest. The whole area in which we were living, about six square blocks, had been put up by the government for refugees from Pakistan. This family was Punjabi, the man was the bookkeeper at the canning factory. He was a stout, pleasant, very religious man who thriftily had crowded his family together and rented half of his block. The woman with shiny dark hair was as large as her husband and looked larger in her Punjabi clothes. She wore a long tunic, sometimes of cotton but most often of dark heavy silk. Draped over her bosom, ends falling down her back, was the usual chiffon scarf. But the part of her costume that made her look so large was her trousers. At the ankles they came into neat embroidered cuffs, but around the waist they were enormous. They were of thinner silk than the tunic but they made her already large hips really bulge. This family sent only cotton clothes to the dhobi so I had seen her silk trousers drying on the line in the back courtyard. They were four yards around the waist, pulled up on a string.

The man could speak English so he chatted a little with me occasionally, but the woman didn't have a word of English and what was worse, no Hindi, Urdu, or Marathi so she couldn't visit with Tai. Madhurani with her gift for languages had promptly set about learning to speak Punjabi so the woman talked with her but it was a slow means of communication. The woman was friendly and curious; she was always coming over if I had my suitcase open or if we were packing things. Tai resented this, but I showed her my clothes. I too had been so curious to see and handle Indian saris and Tai had taken pride in showing me not only her own but Madhurani's too but none of them gave my clothes a

look. The woman laughed a good deal, her sharp black eyes flashing. The rest of the time she spent groaning. When I gave a quick shake of the head to the side in question to her she would clutch her stomach anew and groan louder. From Madhurani I learned that the woman feared that she was pregnant; then as nearly as I could gather she had a miscarriage. A charpoy had been put out for her either on the back verandah or in the sun in the front courtyard. They had had no servant, but now an older woman was there most of the time, sitting on the charpoy with her, chatting and endlessly combing the Punjabi woman's long black hair.

The sixteen-year-old daughter did most of the work. I could see her sweeping out their rooms and bending over their fire pots. She was a slight pretty young girl going to high school. She left about ten after the first main meal and returned about four. Her clothes were cotton, her tunic blue or flowered, her trousers white muslin, but her scarfs were chiffon, pink, blue, or white. She seemed never to have to adjust them as they hung in a graceful swoop in front, the long ends hanging down her back along with her heavy black braid.

The only boy of the family, nine years old, had the stout frame of his parents. He was dressed like Prakash and Kiran in white shirt and khaki shorts, and socks and oxfords. They wore braces to hold their shorts up on their thin frames, but this boy wore a belt cinched tight over his round big stomach. His head under its thick shock of black hair was always set at a cocky angle; he had the bold self reliant ways of a Punjabi. He too went away to school each day, but only in the afternoons. He like Prakash and Kiran played only in the courtyard and on the roof. There were many children in the neighborhood, but these children spent their time in their own block.

Twin girls, five years old, made up the rest of the family; Eva and Topsy I called them to myself but although Eva was the petted darling the analogy was not quite right for while the Topsy girl led the dark side of

life, this child did it without any tricks or sparkle. Most of the time she had her arm over her face to hide her tears. The Eva one had her hair in two neat braids tied with gay ribbons and fresh pretty frocks. Topsy's hair was barely combed and fastened with string and her frocks were her sister's worn out castoffs, too small for her although she was thin compared with Eva's plumpness. This bit of the story Madhurani had got from the mother. She had been so overwhelmed when she had given birth to twins, so unable to face the fact, that her sister had taken Topsy. A year ago they had had to receive her into their home but the mother would make a wry face to Madhurani and say, "You can see how sweet Eva is, but that other girl, she is impossible."

All morning the children had been playing on the roof but when I went into the main room unexpectedly Tai was there scolding Satish and Satish was weeping.

"What is wrong?" I said; Tai could tell by the tone of my voice that I was coming to Satish's defense.

"Akka," Tai spoke sternly to me, "go back to the verandah."

I persisted. "What is wrong, Tai?"

"Akka, it is high time that Satish is being shaped to become a woman. Her parents love her sweet ways so that they have been negligent."

"But what did she do?" I still persisted.

"Our ways are not yours, Akka. It is not seemly for a girl to climb. She can romp on the roof so long as she is the age to wear frocks, but she cannot climb on the ledges as the boys do. You admire the culture of our women; it is developed by early discipline."

Slowly I walked back to the verandah. I had seen hints of Tai's hand on Satish. She was not the laughing carefree child she had been on our arrival. She had her grandmother's strong spirit and that would not bow to discipline easily. Nonetheless when Tai called her to do a service, she had come readily. It was always Satish whom Tai called when she lay on her charpoy and wanted someone to massage her legs which Satish did

by standing on Tai's legs, pressing with her little feet. This was one of the steps in duty and service a little girl must learn young in India.

I sat down in the wicker chair on the front verandah; the boys were at one of their usual games, they had slid down from the roof onto the high wall of the courtyard and were slowly walking around on its narrow top. My mind was still with Satish's, having to bend her will to her elder when I heard a sickening thud. Kiran had fallen a good eight feet on his back onto the brick walk. I screamed and ran to him, Tai and Madhurani coming from the house, Tai saying in a sharp voice, "Akka, be quiet."

Madhurani said nothing but picked the child up, limp in her arms, and carried him into the house and laid him on the charpoy in the main room. Tai laid her hand on his brow and said, "He is all right. We'll let him rest for a while." Kiran's eyes opened but he did not cry or speak. Tai said to Prakash and the neighbor boy, "Go back and play," and to me "Come, Akka, we will sit on the verandah." Madhurani went back to her preparations for the meal.

My mind kept on the child; he had had a hard fall on his back and head from quite a distance. He might have a concussion and he might have injured his back. Soon we were called to eat but no food was offered Kiran. He lay white and silent on the charpoy. When Tai and I came out in our best silks to go to our afternoon's event, the inauguration of the Kashi Taps and Cocks factory, Tai again laid her hand on Kiran's brow and said, "He is all right. Just let him rest."

Tai and I talked about the flood as we rode out to Kashi's factory. The Jumna River had receded but had left pools now stagnant by the roadside. This was my last day in Mathura but Tai felt that we could not refuse Kashi's invitations for the inauguration of the factory this afternoon. I had asked Tai what would be on at the inauguration, but she was vague and we were going late. A feeling of warmth welled up in me as we passed the

double doors of the office building where we had spent the night of the flood and just ahead of us was the high place in the road where we had stood in the dark, the water lapping at our feet as the family came safely out on the raft. We swung around into the factory compound and Kashi himself came to meet us. He was tall and not very dark with a spotless, thin long-sleeved shirt hanging out over a fine white dhoti. His smile was pleasant and welcomed us as it had the flood night.

"I'm so glad you have come," he said. "I wanted you to bring me luck with my new venture. We are just ready to light the fire."

The new building was across from the front of the office; in the open courtyard between were seated about four dozen men, some on chairs, but the older men sitting cross legged on a large low dais that had been erected and covered with white muslin. We were seated in chairs in the center, the only women present. I looked about at the crowd; Madhu I knew would not be there, he and Kashi had become great friends, but the Mathura manager had refused to let Madhu come on the pretext that he himself must be present. There he sat like a fat toad, smiling at us. And I felt a little wicked glee in me for beside him was the representative from the bank whom I had heard squeezing him on a loan back in the days when we were staying at the Mathura Factory Guest-house.

I looked about for Mohan Gang, the industrialist. He was not there, he would not favor this rising young industrialist with his presence. Some of the men in the chairs wore Western clothes, but more than half the group were older Indian men in shirts and dhotis. One quite elderly man seated in the center, in what seemed to be the most prominent place, was Kashi's father, Tai whispered to me.

Competent-looking servants were moving about just in front of the new building where there was a shallow pit in the ground. They were throwing in buckets of coals and adding sticks. Into this through a funnel they

own family, but that last night before I slept I thought about Tai and her family; theirs was the Indian life. Madhu, competent and making a large salary, had to put up with poor housing. Mukund too had a good income and no house. But both had the comfort of willing wives and intelligent children. I drifted off to sleep thinking how their Indian philosophy carried them through life, struggling to get ahead but accepting what came,

Delhi 5

EARLY THE NEXT MORNING Madhu and Madhurani had the farewell prayer and ceremony for my departure in their home, presenting me with a silver cup and having me promise to drink from it with each meal. "Water coming from the metal will benefit your health, Aunti," Madhu said, "and you will be daily reminded of our love and that we have taken you as a member of our family." Then they put heavy flower garlands around my neck; my heart was as brimming full of feeling for them as this silver cup would be of memories.

When Tai and I climbed into the coach of the train, for Delhi, Madhu, Madhurani and the five children came in with us. The children's eyes were big and dark not only with kohl, but with excitement. The bell rang for the train to go; I was afraid the children would be hurt getting off as the train began to move. Madhurani began to smile and said, "We are going, all of us, to see you off in Delhi. We must be with you to the last minute." I smiled through my tears; now I could leave Tai in the arms of her family.

In Delhi we were plunged into the confusion of business. Madhu, so competent with arrangements, and his family went to the Maharastrian Hostel where they planned to spend the night and Tai and I picked up my ticket at the American Express. Once again I said to John Miller that he had given me the loving care of his own grandmother. Next we went to the Air France office and I checked in for the flight (my plane was to leave at 12:13 A.M. to get me into Teheran in the morning), telling them that I would come by taxi to the airport. Next we made a hurried trip to the Iranian Embassy for my visa. Our errands done we went to the hostel and ate. While Maharastrian travelers were received here, most of the occupants were students; the meal was served on long tables, dormitory style. The children, while delighted with their experience, behaved with the restraint of their training.

The hours of waiting seemed long, tension was building up in me; now I would be traveling alone. I was loath to separate myself from the calm philosophical support of this Indian woman whom I called Tai, Sister. Everyone was sad with us. At last we got into the two taxis that Madhu had arranged for and drove out to the airport; it seemed miles out of Delhi. Once there, I was swept into the confusion of checking in with my ticket, going through customs and having my health certificate inspected and my passport checked. I was separated from Tai without saying good-bye to her. She had written a prayer to Krishna for my journey and put it in my purse, but I felt frantic to be torn from her without a farewell. There was just a rope at the side keeping the passengers apart from the others, but it seemed a high barrier.

The check-in desk was near us and my attention was taken by an American man who was determined to carry on the plane two large cases. "I have never been refused," he kept saying. "I can't trust my collection of butterflies in the hold of the plane."

Time passed slowly; at last I appealed to the Indian guard. Like the other Indians, he was touched by this

East-West friendship; he said, "I will not see her slip under the rope, but when the plane is called she must go back quickly."

Tai and I sat down close to one another; outside the children ran about, Madhu and Madhurani calling to us from time to time from back of the barrier. It was 1 A.M., it was 2 A.M. Rumors were circulating among the passengers: the plane, two hours out, had turned back to Bangkok. At last the announcement was made that our plane would not arrive until the next day; we would be taken to the Janpath Hotel. The air hostess, a sweet English girl, consented at once to Tai's going with me. I would pay for her. We said good night to Madhu and Madhurani and the sleepy children, they to go in the taxi to the Maharashtrian Hostel, we to go in the Air France bus to the Janpath. It was a new government hotel and we found it completely modern, the only Indian touch a balcony for each room.

We were called at eight in the morning, assembled in the lobby, the air hostess telling us that our plane would leave at the regular time: 12:30 A.M. that night, but they wanted to be in touch with the passengers for the plane might leave earlier. All of us were ushered into breakfast in an elaborate dining room where we found the captain to be the Indian who had managed the Mount Hotel in Nagpur. Almost before the others had given their orders, Tai and I had fruit, two boiled eggs, toast and coffee served us, the captain at our elbow, smiling and directing the bearer—no dirty clothes here, but white, starched, and clean bright red turbans.

Tai was able to get Madhu on the telephone and soon they came in a taxi. We took another and went out to sight-see for a little. One place we had not visited was the ancient observatory, Madhu was anxious to have the boys see this. We found a centuries-old astronomical arrangement of stones in good repair. There were circles of stones and long stones pointing out. The astronomers could observe the sun's azimuth as well as the lunar and the stellar altitudes and azimuths. Madhu

explained that this meant that not only could astronomical studies be made here and distances computed, but that perfect time could be told. The boys and their father walked and climbed about, but I was relieved when Tai said that we must go to the Janpath Hotel and check in to see about the plane and have lunch. The family would go back to the hostel and eat and rest. They were to join us again at three.

We had lunch, again with red carpet treatment from the captain; rested, and were ready to go when the family came. There was no news from the plane other than that we would depart at 12:30 A.M.

Madhu wanted to take us to the scene of Gandhi's assassination. After a good deal of wandering about in a residential section of Delhi, we found the place: the ashram in the garden of Birla's mansion where Gandhi had been living as a guest. Nothing had been done to make it a shrine; we peered through an iron fence at a well-kept garden, Tai and Madhu both talking about Gandhi and his wonderful life and works. Next Madhu wanted to take us to the Samadhi of Mahatma Gandhi, the place where he was cremated. The children enjoyed the taxi riding and Madhu and Madhurani were enjoying this holiday, but Tai and I were concerned over the air situation.

The Samadhi was at the end of the large open ground where Gandhi used to address the thousands of his followers. Tai and I had visited it before, but the memorial tomb again filled me with quiet wonder. Broad shallow steps led up three terraces: there were stretches of green grass on each side. The culmination was a large, open paved square, a low brick wall enclosing it with the tomb, blocks of white marble laid in a square, three feet high and twenty feet across. It was open to the blue sky and to the Indian sun. As we had seen it before, it was heaped with flowers; it was a living memorial. Slowly we walked with the crowds of Indian people, all of us carrying flowers we had bought from the vendors. Slowly all circled the tomb, placing the flowers among the other blooms. Our

children were solemn; they knew that Mahatma Gandhi was close to them; he was a great leader, but they mourned him as a member of their family.

We went back to the Janpath, Madhu and Madhurani going back to the hostel to let their children sleep. We had dinner; no news from the plane. The family came, the children playing about in the small garden in front of the hotel. At last, about ten, we went to the airport again; this time the air hostess passed Tai in with me.

Again I checked in my ticket; the American man with the butterfly cases was just in front of me having another long argument over taking them on the plane. I had my baggage examined by customs, my health certificate was checked, and my passport examined. Tai and I sat down again on a bench, passengers all about us visiting now. We were becoming well acquainted; we set up a friendship with a genial big Texan and his pleasant wife. They were on a world tour but were not going to stop at Teheran. The children were tired now; Madhurani had gone with them into a part of the airport where they could lie on the benches and sleep. Madhu, a strength always, kept coming back and forth calling to us. At last it was two o'clock and no plane, only the pleasant firm disposition of the air hostess was saving the situation. At three o'clock it was announced that the plane was not coming and that we would be taken back to the Janpath again. The air hostess and official asked to take and keep our passports so that we would not have to go through another of the tedious checks. The passengers were worn out, tempers were short, none of us wanted to give up his passport, but at last we consented. It was four o'clock when we reached the Janpath, Tai thinking of the tired sleepy children being trundled back to the hostel again.

At eight in the morning we were called; we were to go to the airport at ten-thirty. Tai made a quick call to Madhu. The Air France passengers sat in a group in the Janpath lobby, tired and mad, and I began to see that now I would reach Teheran in the night. My

friend's son was to meet me but there was no way to let him know the new time of my arrival. It would take a wire two days to go from Delhi to Teheran and be delivered. Frank would, of course, know that my plane had not come, but I doubted that he would be able to find my new arrival time. He had made a hotel reservation for me but I did not know the name of the hotel: the only thing I had was Frank's telephone number.

The bus came and took us to the airport again. This time, once in the enclosure, we rushed to see if the plane was there. It was, with its name Air France, but it was covered with a network of ladders; the engine was still being worked on. At once an announcement was made that we would have to go through the various checks again, this was another day and passport checks could not go over. The passengers, all of us worn and short of temper, muttered; first there was a scramble as our precious passports were returned. The checks were rapid, we were just passed through as a formality. Then began another wait. I tried to shut my fears in myself but I was frantic at thinking of arriving alone in Teheran in the night. At last I began to talk about it to Tai.

"I have been considering it, Akka. I do not see how Mr. Frank can discover the time of your coming. Let me go for a minute."

I sat numb with fatigue and fright. When things were tight for Tai, Lord Krishna always came to her rescue, but what could help me? I had shut my eyes in despair, but I opened them aware that someone was approaching; it was Tai and a smiling young man.

"Akka," Tai said, "Rourollah Sharif-Vatani will take your care." I smiled too, Tai had brought her Krishna to help me.

Rourollah smiled at me and said, "Have no fear, I will manage for you, Madame."

Rourollah Sharif-Vatani looked international; his skin was olive, his large almond eyes dark; he was quite plump so his face was not as long and oval and his nose did not have the hawk shape to mark him as an Iranian.

He was clad in English tweeds, his luggage was of the best quality, and he bore the marks of the seasoned traveler. Tai and I had already visited with him during this tedious waiting period, he telling us that he had watched us especially: our deep friendship was so evident and personal friendship between the East and West was so rare. He too had a very close Western friend, freely he gave her name, Alice Allen—she was one of the wealthiest women in the United States. "She is my lifeline," he said, "she will do anything for me." Rourollah had told us that he was the youngest colonel in the Iranian army. "Really, you know, we are police officers. I have just been ten months in the United States studying police methods. Most of the time I was in the New York area and spent weekends with Alice. She has an estate near there.

Tai and I had teased Rourollah about his numerous phone calls to Alice. She had come as far as Calcutta with him and was waiting there until his plane took off for Iran. I had said, "Americans have a great curiosity about such a great heiress; what is she really like?"

Rourollah said fondly, "She is a wonderful person." Then he said, "I'll tell you, Mrs. Armstrong, she is the kind of girl who washes out her own underthings when she is traveling. She is a keen business woman and keeps in close touch with her affairs. And she selects herself the things that are bought for her houses. She has advice on all matters, of course, but she makes her own decisions."

Rourollah talked fondly too of his family in Teheran. "I have a lovely wife and two charming children. They are not worrying over this delay in planes. They know I am coming home about this time, but I did not designate a day of arrival."

The three of us waited together, Rourollah talkative and gay, Tai and I too full of thoughts to speak.

I held Tai's hand in mine those last minutes. I kept back my tears and looked at it, the slender graceful brown hand lying in my square white hand. Marriage lines in both our palms and the cross for happy mar-

riages, but Tai's marriage cut so short and my line going on almost to the golden anniversary before the line was crossed. Both of us had lines for two sons, this time Tai's still definite, but I with one line crossed off. My hand had money, not wealth, but enough for freedom from worry; Tai's had nothing but a struggle against odds. My palm had a house, a big house; Tai's had none; both of our palms had talent, mine weak, unused, Tai's firm and strong. I had strong lines of support, Tai had marks of good luck; mine was dependent; Tai's was independent. My palm was full of the fine lines of worry; Tai's palm was smooth. Both of us had long travel lines, mine shaped like a mango, so that Tai had said, "It was destined when you were born, Akka, that you would come to India." And Tai had made the long voyage to the United States.

Grandmothers that we were, I wondered about the future for both of us. Tai had said about herself, "What comes will come," but again and again she had studied my palm saying, "There are still events of moment in your hand, Akka. You have a strong line leading to your fortune line from the sea: your travel line touches it. You must watch and work, Akka. Something will come to you from the sea."

The call to board the plane seemed abrupt when it came. I embraced Tai, she moved away from me slipping under the rope into the arms of her waiting family. I watched her go. Suddenly she seemed to get smaller and browner. Again she was the small mystic symbol of India that had crouched on my bed strengthening me with her philosophy. Roufollah at my side, I put up my head and walked to the plane, turning back when I was up on the steps to wave: all the hands waving at me looked like the flutter of birds. I wished that they could fly with me.

the path before me

PATNA WAITING ROOM

MY DEAR ARKA,

We were on the airfield till your plane was out of sight and with heavy heart we returned to the Maharastrian Lodge, children all the time saying that White Aji has flown away with the plane. Madhu and Madhurani equally felt the pangs of your separation. We have taken you as one of the heads of our family members, and we love you as our own. Back in Mathura, the house and our room looked deserted; I could not sit in it without you; your departure has left a great void. All those who used to see us together all the time felt our separation.

Thursday, I started for Kathmandu. I got the same coupe, but there was my name only, missing was your familiar name. Some unwanted passenger had occupied my place from Delhi and I had to drive him out. I was all alone the rest of the journey, but I was sleeping

where you used to sleep, that comforted me and gave courage. I had Genghis Khan with me to read and I did start reading but your maxim that when you are traveling you liked to see and enjoy the surrounding country scene prevailed on me, and I put the book aside, and tried to look out the windows, and to my surprise I had seen five peacocks with their grand tails. Everywhere the wheat was gathered and there was more activity on the countryside, but my mind was not in a state to enjoy anything, it is so hard to check my tears.

Well, Akka, now you have come out into the world. It was admirable to see you go the plane alone. I am confident of your courage and wisdom, your strength to rise to the occasion. Akka, you were a tower of strength to me. You should hold yourself and continue to be a strength to your family and your friends. People, your own as well as others, will recognize that you were not merely a shadow of your husband, but you have embodied some of his good qualities along with your own and whoever knows you closely will surely know that they can depend on your wisdom and courage. I have been a close observer of you and enjoyed to see you handle your affairs so ably. You were too shy to admit your ability. How proud of you your family must be and how eager they must be to hear your experiences. You will be lavished with love and affection and hardly think of the hardships you had to undergo when you were with me. I was all the time aware of my shortcomings, but your kind and gracious heart made everything so pleasant.

By the way, Akka, do not try to have vision for yourself of your husband, and do not again sit in your room brooding and crying. If you are sad all the time the departed souls will not feel happy. After all, human beings are mortal and one passes when one's time comes, and no one can prevent it. One day we will go their way; so pray for their souls that they may rest in peace. Try to do something that they liked and enjoy the days to come.

Akka, you know how close our hearts are, and we

can come closer still. You know if we love someone, we can understand that person's mind without telling. This can be if the person is with you, but nothing is impossible, our minds and feelings can transcend air and water for unlimited distance so that I can know and feel your thoughts exactly as if I am sitting by your side, and the method is easy and clear. For a certain length of time what we both should do is to write each other that on a certain day on a certain time you are going to sit and think about me. On that time, I shall be particular to think about you and try to understand what you must be thinking and I will note it down, and you should also note down your thoughts at that particular time, and we should exchange our notes and see how close our thoughts have come. If we do this for six months, even with great distance, we will be able to read one another's thoughts and the same thoughts will come to our minds at the same time. Let us try this.

Akka, let me tell you again that we can remember each other in our next life. Yes! if we try. Persons who are experienced in matters of faith and soul have told me that if you try to remember what you have done a previous day, and a day before, and a day before then he sharpens his memory and can remember things. In this way if he tries and keeps trying then even after death he remembers what he was in the previous life. Those who have high soul, they can remember their previous life and can recognize their previous relatives and friends.

Just as I was writing here, who has come to the station do you think? The King of Nepal. I do not know where he was going, but his special compartment guarded with soldiers was just opposite the waiting room and men gathered to see him.

I will write again when I reach Kathmandu.

I pray for your safe arrival and health, with fondest love,